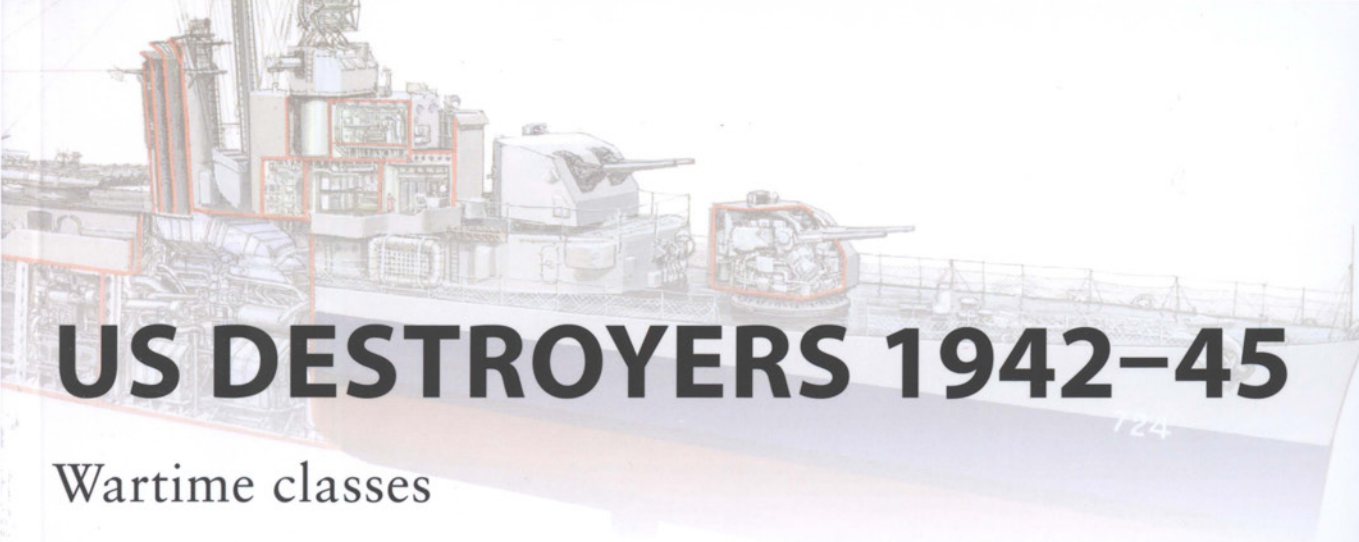


A detailed technical cutaway diagram of a US destroyer, showing internal components like the engine room, gun turrets, and radar systems. The ship's hull number '124' is visible on the side.

US DESTROYERS 1942-45

Wartime classes



DAVE McCOMB

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL WRIGHT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

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NEW VANGUARD • 165

US DESTROYERS 1942-45

Wartime classes



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First published in Great Britain in 2010 by Osprey Publishing,
Midland House, West Way, Botley, Oxford, OX2 0PH, UK
44-02 23rd St, Suite 219, Long Island City, NY 11101, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com

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A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library

Print ISBN: 978 1 84603 444 2

PDF e-book ISBN: 978 1 84908 267 9

Page layout by: Melissa Orrom Swan

Index by Alan Thatcher

Typeset in Sabon and Myriad Pro

Originated by PDQ Media, Bungay, UK

Printed in China through Worldprint Ltd

10 11 12 13 14 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This book is a product of years of warm relations with an extensive network of World War II shipmates, family members, and friends. It reflects particular contributions from Captain Doug Aitken, Captain Cal Calhoun, Bill Cole II, Nate Cook, Captain Russell Crenshaw, Jr., Captain Dave Davenport, George Eisenberg, John Everett, Jack Fitch, Warren Gabelman, Red Lail, Joe Moll, Captain Charlie Nelson, John O'Neill, Vice Admiral Ray Peet, Ari Phoutrides, Vane Scott, Doug Starr, Doug Turpen, and Captain Bill Vose, plus the much appreciated work of other respected sources including Rick Davis, Ed Finney, Chuck Haberlein, Terry Miller, Vince O'Hara, Captain Pete Orvis, Tim Rizzuto, Steve Roberts, Randy Short, Mike Staton, Paul Stillwell, and the staff at the National Archives and Records Administration.

Squadron tables show initial or intended composition only.

Those wishing to explore this subject in more detail may find additional photographs, maps and track charts, records, and tables at www.destroyerhistory.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The following abbreviations indicate the sources of the images used in this volume:

NARA – National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

NH – Naval History & Heritage Command, Washington, D.C.

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US DESTROYERS 1942-45

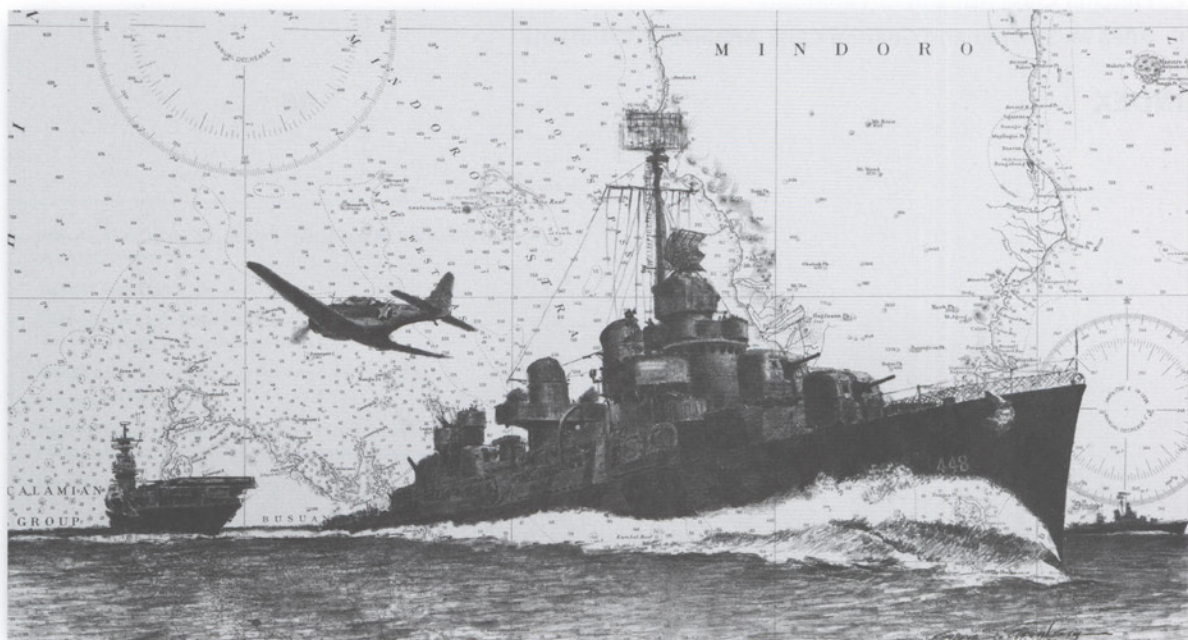
WARTIME CLASSES

INTRODUCTION

The 1940s represented the zenith of a technological era when machines displayed their muscle on the outside and when their performance depended more on an operator's skill than on computational science. On land, at sea, and in the air, the period spawned visceral designs that still excite interest today; and among warships, none were more advanced than the destroyers – the scrappy “tin cans” – those most versatile of surface combatants upon which every larger ship type depended as a first line of defense against all forms of attack.

By 1941 the term “destroyer” had come to mean a compact fighting machine, bursting with crew, and with serious hitting and staying power. In addition to the enormous machinery needed to drive it well above its theoretical hull speed, such a ship carried as much armament as deck space and stability would permit. Inevitably its small size also made it a natural choice for any assignment where larger ships were ill-suited or too expensive to risk, from giving battle in confined waters to maintaining station on

Fletcher-class destroyer
La Vallette in a drawing made
at sea on a navigation chart of
the Philippines. Using whatever
media were available on board,
shipmate George Eisenberg
produced more than 350 works
and emerged from World War II
as the Navy's most prolific
combat artist, later honored
for “capturing the souls of
our sailors and ships ... in
a hauntingly realistic and
personally touching way.”
(Courtesy of George S. Eisenberg,
georgeseisenberg.com)



exposed radar picket lines to delivering the mail. Not surprisingly, by the end of World War II, nations around the world had placed in commission more than 1,000 destroyers large and small – and of all these, none earned more acclaim than the US Navy’s 2,100-ton Fletcher class and its larger Allen M. Sumner- and Gearing-class derivatives.

Their numbers alone would have ensured recognition: by the end of World War II, 287 had entered service – doubling the US Navy’s destroyer force – including 175 Fletchers, the largest destroyer class ever built. More significant was their thoroughbred design, in which was achieved a long-sought-after balance of ruggedness and seaworthiness, armament, speed, and protection. As built, they were also striking in appearance – the Fletchers in particular exhibiting hull proportions, grace, and overall harmony worthy of a yacht.

For those who knew them, however, their real renown stemmed from their record in battle. Manned by a mix of regular Navy veterans and wartime recruits who trained hard and fought harder, they became the US Navy’s workhorses during three years of combat in the Pacific. There, on a grand stage on which nearly all of them saw action, the “fighting Fletchers” and late-war Sumners answered every threat and carved out for themselves a place among the outstanding fighting ships of all time.

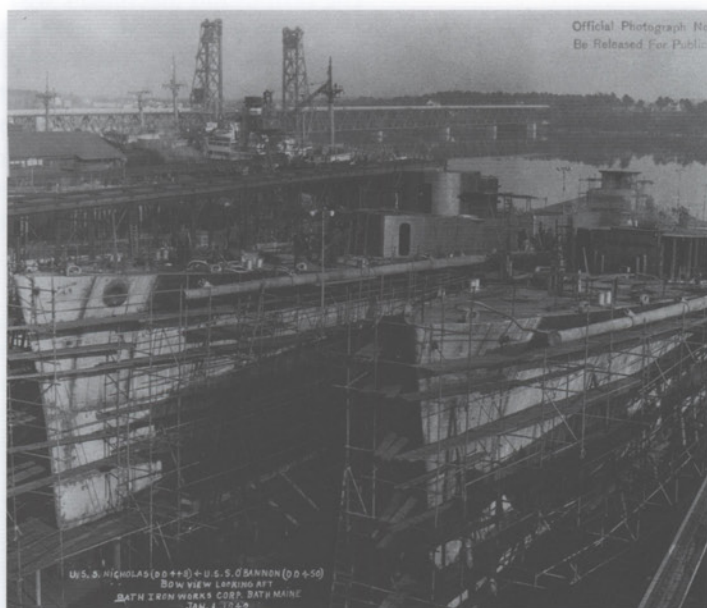
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

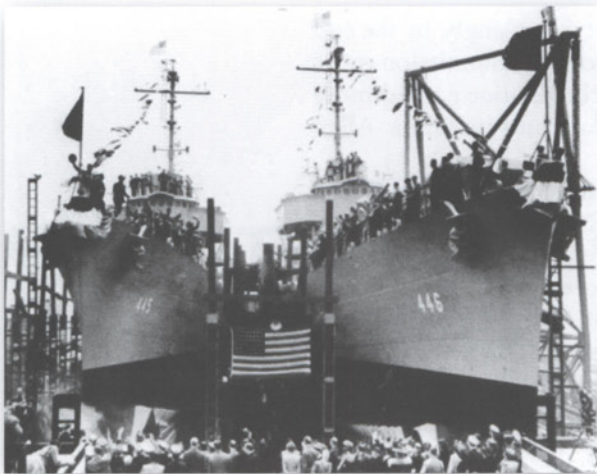
Their design was evolutionary. Its origin followed the unhappy discovery that the 1,620-ton Benson and 1,630-ton Gleaves classes from fiscal years 1938, ’39 and ’40 were top-heavy and could not carry five 5-inch guns and ten torpedoes as designed. In October 1939, a month after war had broken out in Europe, the Navy’s General Board began its normal practice of scheduling internal hearings regarding design characteristics for a new destroyer to be funded in the 1941 fiscal year. The result was an enlarged 2,050-ton design that could comfortably mount the Bensons’ originally intended armament. On January 27, 1940, Secretary of the Navy Charles Edison approved it and soon the firm of Gibbs & Cox was selected as design agent.

The pace of events quickened on May 10, when Germany stunned the world with its “blitzkrieg” invasion of the Netherlands and Belgium. On June 11, Congress appropriated funds for both the first of 25 Fletchers and, as their delivery could not be expected for two years, also authorized more destroyers of the preceding classes.

Urgency increased further on June 14, when German tanks entered Paris. On the 17th, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark requested \$4 billion to expand the Navy by 70 percent. A month later, on July 19, Congress passed the Vinson-Walsh “Two-Ocean Navy” Act, the largest single naval building program in US history, which provided for 115 additional destroyers.

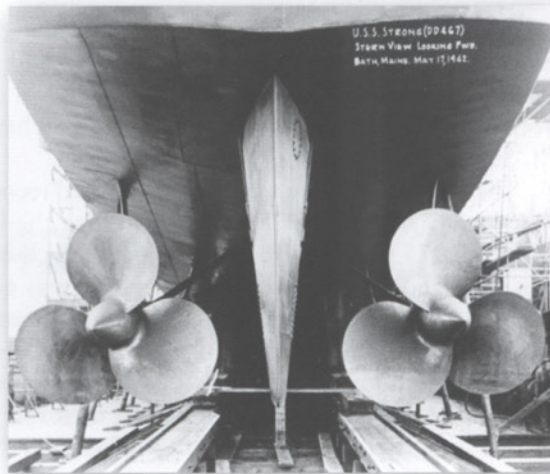
The first two Fletchers, the future *Nicholas* and *O’Bannon*, under construction at Bath Iron Works on Maine’s Kennebec River on New Year’s Day 1942. Christening had to be scheduled during slack water at high tide, so that the newly-launched hulls would not ground in the narrow river or be swept upstream into the Carlton Bridge in the background. (NARA 19-N-35340)





ABOVE

A long-anticipated launch day, May 3, 1942: *Fletcher* (left) begins her slide down the ways; *Radford* (right) will be next at Federal Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company, Kearny, New Jersey. (NARA)



ABOVE RIGHT

Sixty thousand horses will soon pass this way: *Strong's* rudder and twin screws on christening day, May 17, 1942. The 2,100-tonners' large turning radius forced shiphandlers to steer by varying engine speeds in confined waters. Summers and Gearings had twin rudders. (NARA)

The Fletcher Class

Design for the "2,100-ton" class began with a "flush-deck" hull descended from the raised-forecastle 1,630-tonners but with increased draft amidships for greater strength. At 376½ feet, its overall length was 28½ feet (nearly 8 percent) greater than the Bensons and Gleaves but bow freeboard was reduced by a foot (5 percent).

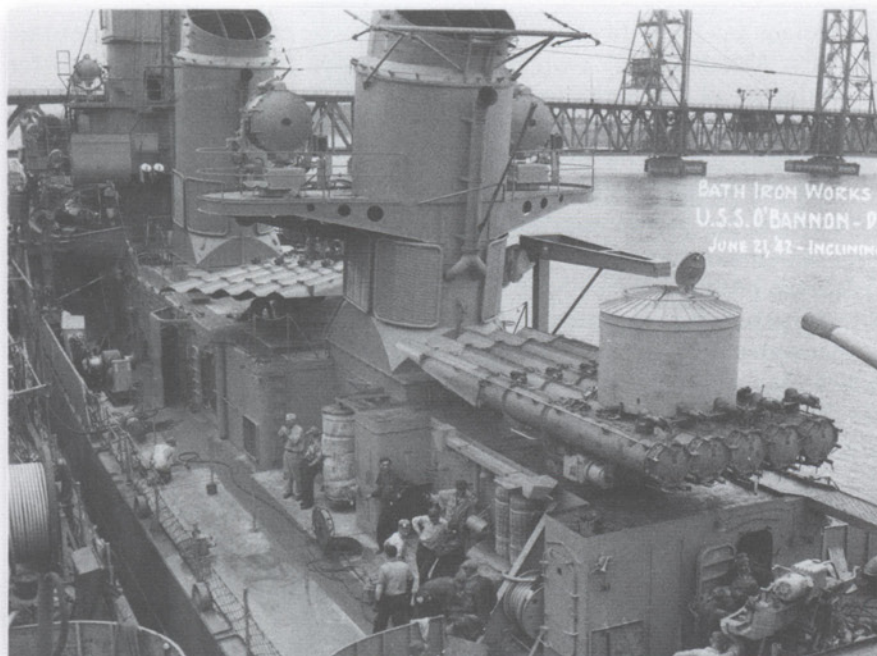
Propulsion machinery

Internally, engineering spaces occupied the central third of the ship. Another third was devoted to fuel and ammunition, which left a scant third for the crew. The general arrangement carried over the split powerplant pioneered in the Gleaves: immediately abaft the forward fireroom was the forward engine room, which drove the starboard shaft; the after fireroom and engine room formed a separate pair. All were isolated from the rest of the ship by watertight bulkheads and could be entered only via vertical ladders descending from scuttles in the main deck.

The propulsion machinery was that newly standardized with the Gleaves class – a high-pressure high-temperature steam design, which delivered 20 to 30 percent greater efficiency than contemporary foreign designs. Babcock & Wilcox or Foster Wheeler manufactured the boilers; General Electric, Westinghouse, or Allis-Chalmers produced the steam turbines, which were rated at 60,000 total shaft horsepower, 20 percent more than the Gleaves. Design speed was 38 knots – 5 knots faster than the contemporary Essex-class carriers and Iowa-class battleships that the new destroyers would screen.

Main gun armament and radar

For their main gun battery, the 2,100-tonners carried the outstanding 5-inch/38 cal. dual-purpose gun developed in the early thirties. Four guns in single mounts were fitted fore and aft. A fifth gun was added amidships, where its arc of fire was restricted to 140 degrees on either side – less at low elevation. Controlling the 5-inch guns was a Mark 37 director mounted atop the bridge structure with an optical rangefinder plus its own fire-control radar. Through electrical connections to a computer in a "plotting room" below decks, the director could control the guns for both anti-air and surface action. Fuzes could also be set automatically by computer-controlled fuze setters in the projectile hoists. Later, fuze setting for antiaircraft fire was



O'Bannon at Bath during an inclining experiment, June 21, 1942. Stacks, searchlights, and torpedo tubes are prominent, with the 5-inch practice loading machine at lower right. (NARA 19-N-18672)

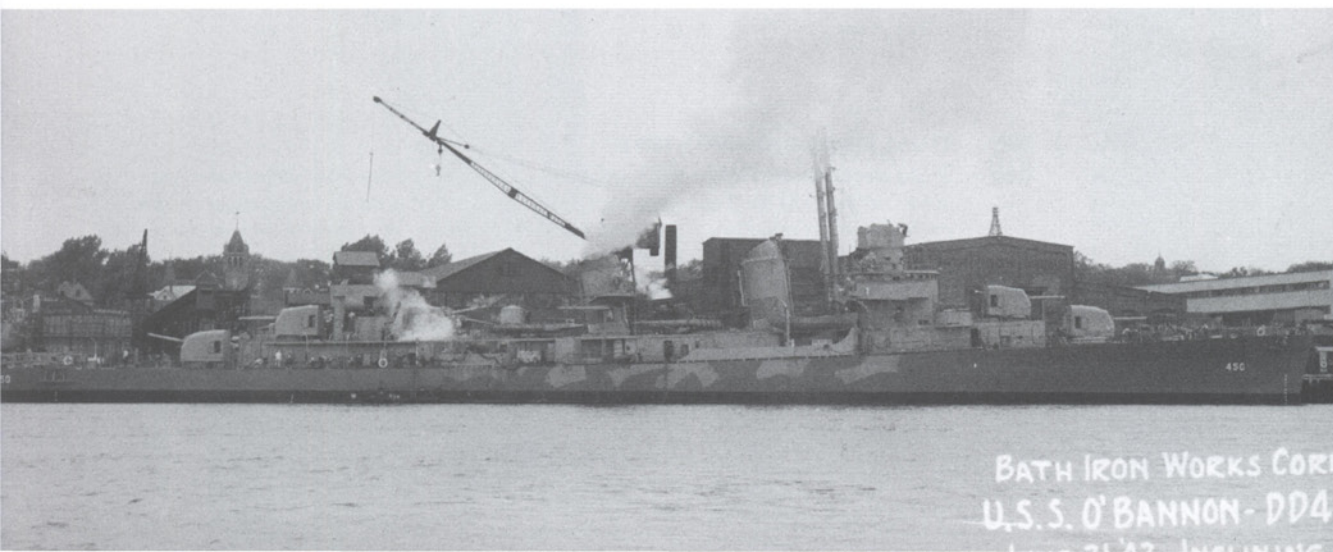
eliminated entirely with the advent of the VT radio proximity fuze, which emitted a radio signal and activated when it passed near a target.

New to the Navy was the Fletchers' SG surface-search radar, whose development had been led by the Naval Research Laboratory at Anacostia, D.C. Its British-originated Plan Position Indicator (PPI) scope was a polar-coordinate display initially mounted in the chart room on the bridge level. For the first time, the PPI provided a map-like representation of the area swept by the radar beam, in effect making it possible to see in the dark.

Light antiaircraft armament

As late as December 1940, the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance warned that inadequate close-range anti-aircraft gun defense was its most serious weakness, and took steps to procure more effective weapons. Its attention was attracted to a 40mm design which had earned a reputation during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Securing a manufacturing license was one problem; transferring technology was another, complicated by a need to translate European metric

Another view of O'Bannon at Bath with modified Measure 12 camouflage partially applied; it was later painted out. (NARA 19-N-18672)



dimensions and file-to-fit craftsmanship to replicable manufacturing tolerances. The first American-built twin Bofors appeared in January 1942, timely for mounting in all but Bath's first three Fletchers (a quad version followed in April). For each installation, a lead angle-computing Mark 51 director was fitted nearby, e.g., on the flying bridge or the after stack.

Like the 40mm, a 20mm gun from the Oerlikon Machine Tool Works in Switzerland had proven itself during the Spanish Civil War. Here, negotiations over manufacture and Swiss government approval lasted until August 1941. American production finally commenced after Pearl Harbor. There was no director; everything depended on the gunner's skill – but some gunners were so good that a captain would try to take incoming planes on the side on which they were stationed. While the 40mm became the weapon of choice, the 20mm were lighter and easier to mount in more positions on deck and, not being powered, could be brought into action more quickly.

Typical armament			
Class	Fletcher ¹	Allen M. Sumner ¹	Gearing ¹
21-inch torpedo tubes	10 (2 quintuple mounts)		5 (1 quintuple mount)
5-inch/38 cal. dual purpose	5 (5 single mounts)	6 (3 twin mounts)	
40mm Bofors	10 (5 twin mounts)	12 (2 twin, 2 quad mounts)	16 (2 twin, 3 quad mounts)
20mm Oerlikon	7 (7 single mounts)	11 (11 single mounts)	18 (9 twin mounts)
Depth charges	2 tracks for 600-lb charges; 6 projectors for 300-lb charges		

¹ See Appendices for wartime variations

Typical ammunition			
Gun	5-inch/38 cal. DP	40mm Bofors	20mm Oerlikon
Projectile weight	53.3–55.1 lb	2 lb	0.27 lb
Explosive weight	2.4–7.7 lb	0.15 lb	0.024 lb
Cartridge case weight	27.5 lb	2.3 lb	0.25 lb
Muzzle velocity	2,600 ft/sec.	2,890 ft/sec.	2,740 ft/sec.
Range @ elevation	18,200 yd @ 45 deg.	11,000 yd @ 43 deg.	4,800 yd @ 35 deg.
Ceiling @ elevation	37,200 ft @ 85 deg.	22,800 ft @ 90 deg.	10,000 ft @ 90 deg.
Rounds/min.	15–20	160	450

A

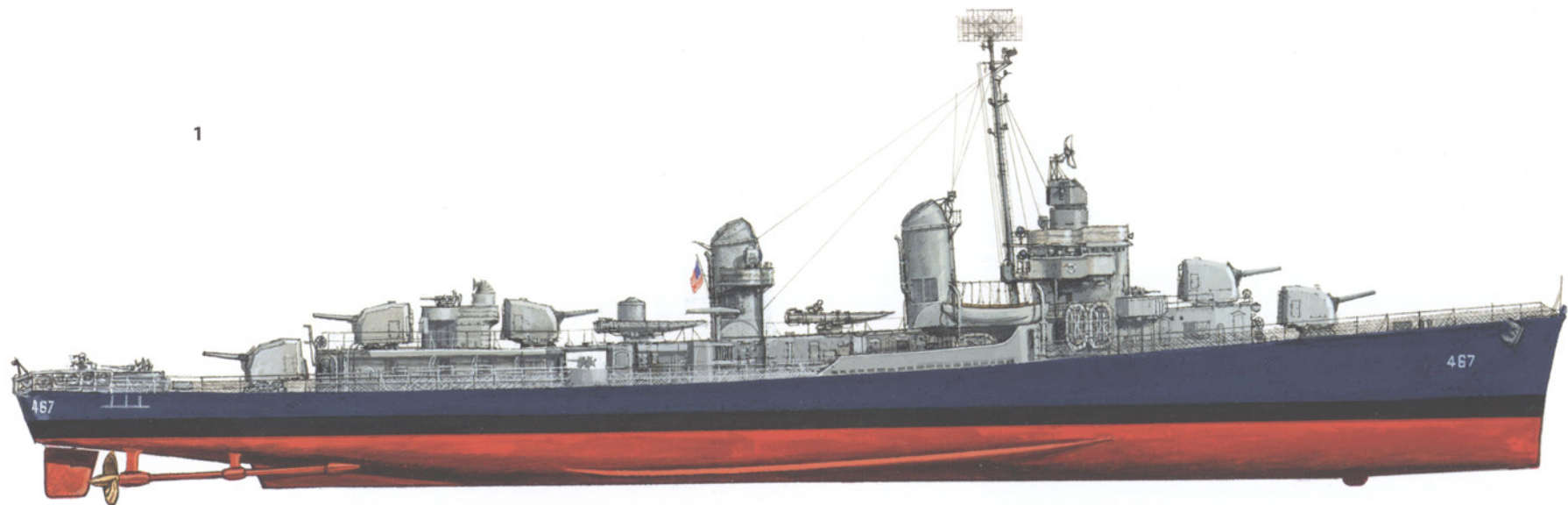
1) USS *STRONG* (DD 467), 1942

Strong was the fourth Fletcher built at Bath Iron Works and the first fitted with a 40mm twin Bofors between the No. 3 and No. 4 5-inch mounts and another on the fantail. Here she appears in the Measure 18 camouflage that several Bath-built "boats" briefly carried in the summer of 1942 before repainting. Highly-respected *Strong* was the second 2,100-tonner sunk.

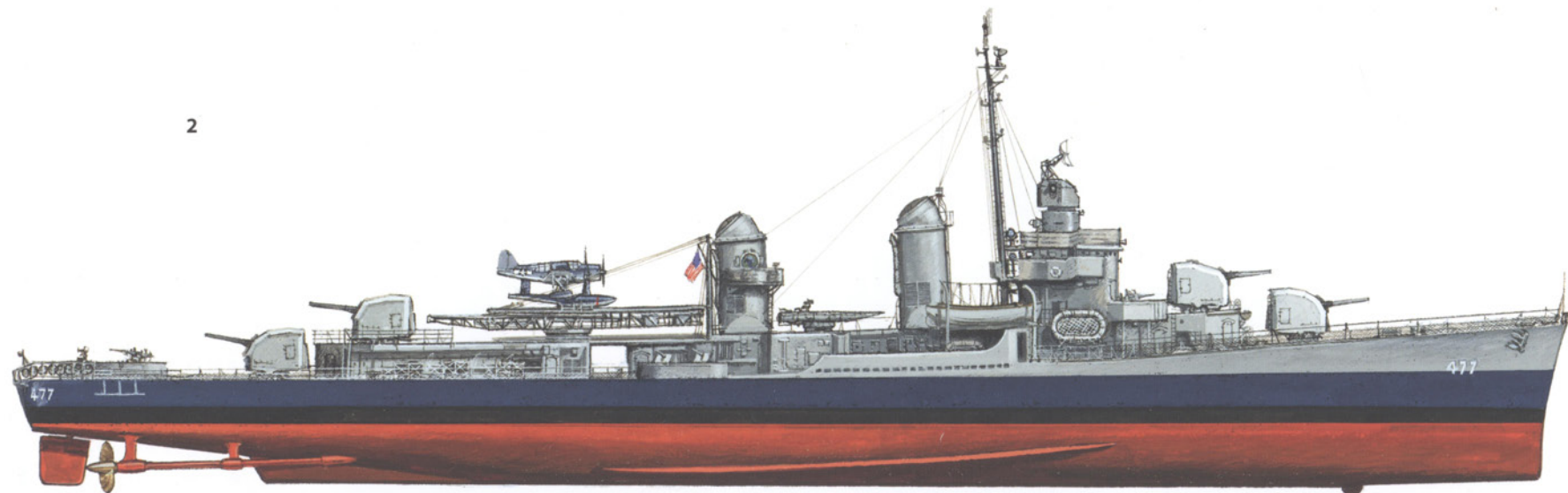
2) USS *PRINGLE* (DD 477), 1943

Six round-bridge Fletchers were scheduled for modification during construction to take a floatplane catapult. *Pringle*, *Stevens*, and *Halford* were completed with this arrangement, which *Pringle* used in January 1943 while escorting a convoy in the Atlantic. The catapult was not considered a success, however, and after hers was removed, *Pringle* joined DesRon 22 in the Pacific.

1



2



Bath Iron Works was the United States' leading destroyer builder during World War II. This May 22, 1945 view looks east and shows 12 Gearings at various stages of completion. (NARA BuAer 342435)



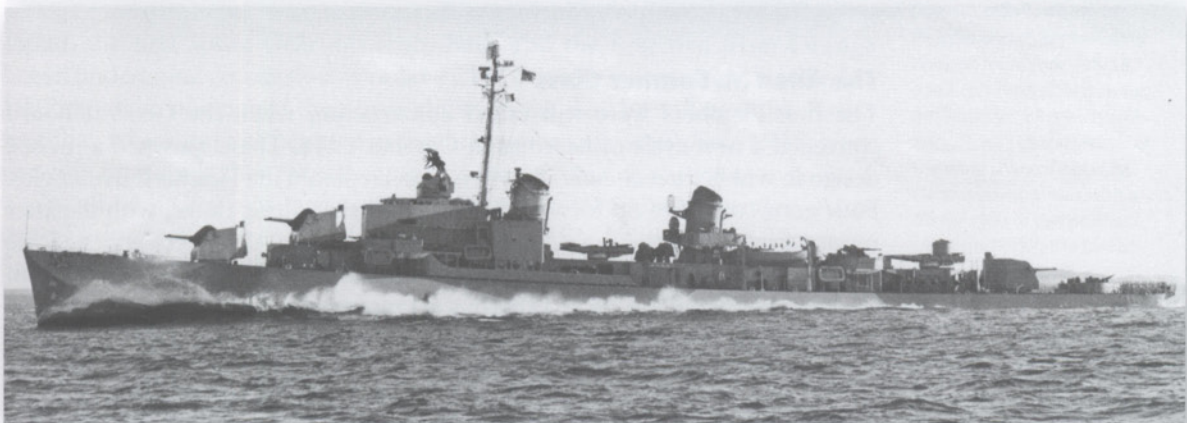
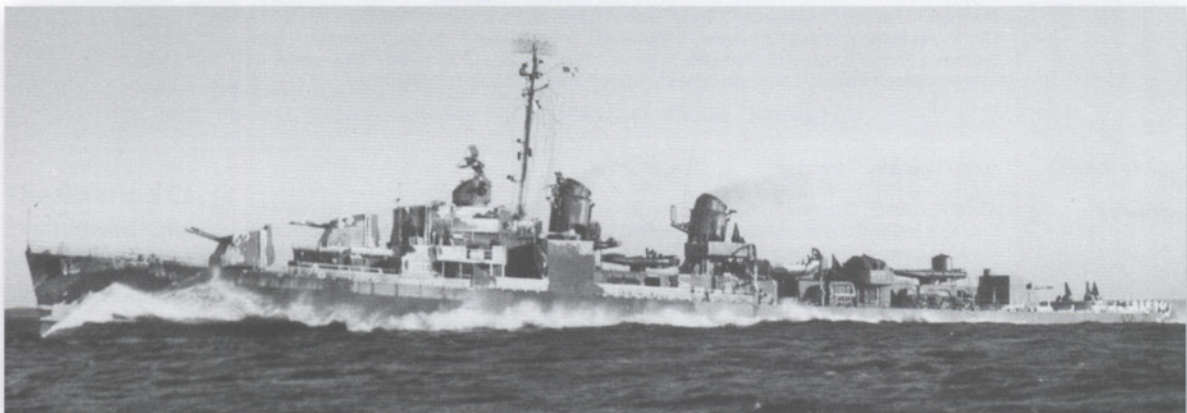
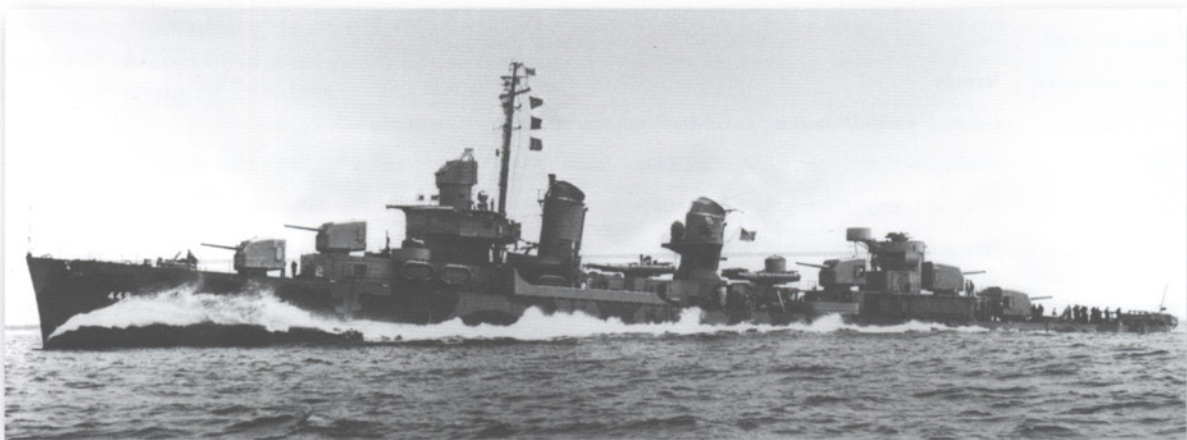
Torpedoes and antisubmarine armament

A destroyer's most formidable weapon was the torpedo. The American Mark 15 was 24 feet long and weighed 3,850 lb with an 825-lb warhead. Range depended on speed setting – from 6,000 yards at 45 knots up to 15,000 yards at 26.5 knots. Running depth could be set from a torpedo director on the bridge or locally. After the war started, however, it became apparent that American submarine and destroyer torpedoes were faulty – running too deep and exploding prematurely or not at all. These problems, which doubtless would have been corrected before the war had funds been available for adequate testing, proved agonizingly difficult to find and fix during wartime. Only in August 1943, after the battle of Kolombangara, did the Mark 15 come into its own as an effective weapon.

Against submarines, every destroyer carried sonar – echo-ranging equipment that could be used in either active or passive (listening) mode. Anti-submarine armament consisted of depth charges. Initially these were cylindrical “ash cans” carrying 300 or 600 lb of explosives, which sank at a nominal 9 feet per second. Later the Navy introduced teardrop-shaped charges, which could sink at 23 feet per second. Collectively, the 2,100-tonners sank or helped sink approximately 30 enemy submarines during the war.

Construction

Eleven shipyards built 175 Fletchers. Federal Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company of Kearny, New Jersey, the lead yard, delivered 29 of them. Maine's Bath Iron Works, the most prolific, completed 31 including the first one, *Nicholas*. They began arriving at a rate of three per month in mid-1942, climbing to five in October, ten or more in seven of the last eight months of 1943. The Charleston and Boston Navy yards were fastest to launch; two from the former took only 77 days. Excluding those from the Puget Sound Navy Yard and Gulf Shipbuilding, the average was 193 days and, excluding six ships set aside for an aborted floatplane catapult installation, the average from keel laying to commissioning was 331 days. All except two were delivered by the end of 1944.



One recognition feature differentiated the Fletchers from one another. Fifty-eight – one-third of the total – were completed with the round-faced bridge structure introduced in the Sims class of 1937; the remainder were built with a square-faced pilot house and a walkaround platform forward for improved all-around observation plus a lowered gun director for a reduced silhouette and improved stability.

The new destroyers proved to be quick, though not capable of 38 knots as hoped for; *Nicholas* reached 37.1 on trials at a moderate displacement and, while runs of 36 knots or more were occasionally logged under wartime conditions, 34 knots was generally regarded as the best formation speed.

The first-completed ships of each class running standardization trials on the measured mile off Rockland, Maine.

TOP: *Nicholas* at 36.43 knots on May 28, 1942. (NH)

CENTER: *Barton* with a coating of ice at 34.75 knots on December 29, 1943. (NARA 19-N-61064)

BOTTOM: *Frank Knox* at 33.16 knots on December 2, 1944. (NARA 19-N-75577)

Fletcher class	
Hull Numbers	Names
445–451	Fletcher, ^{A1} Radford, ^{A1} Jenkins, ^{A1} La Vallette, ^{A1} Nicholas, ^{A2} O'Bannon, ^{A2} Chevalier ^{A2}
465–475	Saufley, ^{A1} Waller, ^{A1} Strong, ^{A2} Taylor, ^{A2} De Haven, ^{A2} Bache, ^{A3} Beale, ^{A3} Guest, ^{A4} Bennett, ^{A4} Fullam, ^{A4} Hudson ^{A4}
476–481*	Hutchins, ^{A4} Pringle, ^{A5} Stanly, ^{A5} Stevens, ^{A5} Halford, ^{A6} Leutze ^{A6}
498–502	Philip, ^{A1} Renshaw, ^{A1} Ringgold, ^{A1} Schroeder, ^{A1} Sigsbee ^{A1}
507–522	Conway, ^{A2} Cony, ^{A2} Converse, ^{A2} Eaton, ^{A2} Foote, ^{A2} Spence, ^{A2} Terry, ^{A2} Thatcher, ^{A2} Anthony, ^{A2} Wadsworth, ^{A2} Walker, ^{A2} Brownson, ^{B3} Daly, ^{B3} Isherwood, ^{B3} Kimberly, ^{B3} Luce ^{B3}
526–541	Abner Read, ^{B7} Ammen, ^{B7} Mullany, ^{B7} Bush, ^{B7} Trathen, ^{B7} Hazelwood, ^{B7} Heermann, ^{B7} Hoel, ^{B7} McCord, ^{B7} Miller, ^{B7} Owen, ^{B7} The Sullivans, ^{B7} Stephen Potter, ^{B7} Tingey, ^{B7} Twining, ^{B7} Yarnall ^{B7}
544–547	Boyd, ^{B8} Bradford, ^{B8} Brown, ^{B8} Cowell ^{B8}
550–597	Capps, ^{A9} David W. Taylor, ^{A9} Evans, ^{A9} John D. Henley, ^{A9} Franks, ^{B10} Haggard, ^{B10} Hailey, ^{B10} Johnston, ^{B10} Laws, ^{B10} Longshaw, ^{B10} Morrison, ^{B10} Prichett, ^{B10} Robinson, ^{B10} Ross, ^{B10} Rowe, ^{B10} Smalley, ^{B10} Stoddard, ^{B10} Watts, ^{B10} Wren, ^{B10} Aulick, ^{A11} Charles Ausburne, ^{A11} Claxton, ^{A11} Dyson, ^{A11} Harrison, ^{A11} John Rodgers, ^{A11} McKee, ^{A11} Murray, ^{A11} Sproston, ^{A11} Wickes, ^{A11} William D. Porter, ^{A11} Young, ^{A11} Charrette, ^{B4} Conner, ^{B4} Hall, ^{B4} Halligan, ^{B4} Haraden, ^{B4} Newcomb, ^{B4} Bell, ^{B5} Burns, ^{B5} Izard, ^{B5} Paul Hamilton, ^{B5} Twiggs, ^{B5} Howorth, ^{A6} Killen, ^{A6} Hart, ^{B6} Metcalf, ^{B6} Shields, ^{B6} Wiley ^{B6}
629–631	Abbot, ^{B2} Braine, ^{B2} Erben ^{B2}
642–644	Hale, ^{B2} Sigourney, ^{B2} Stember ^{B2}
649–691	Albert W. Grant, ^{B5} Caperton, ^{B2} Cogswell, ^{B2} Ingersoll, ^{B2} Knapp, ^{B2} Bearss, ^{B9} John Hood, ^{B9} Van Valkenburgh, ^{B9} Charles J. Badger, ^{B3} Colahan, ^{B3} Dashiell, ^{B1} Bullard, ^{B1} Kidd, ^{B1} Bennion, ^{B4} Heywood L. Edwards, ^{B4} Richard P. Leary, ^{B4} Bryant, ^{B5} Black, ^{B1} Chauncey, ^{B1} Clarence K. Bronson, ^{B1} Cotten, ^{B1} Dortch, ^{B1} Gatling, ^{B1} Healy, ^{B1} Hickox, ^{B1} Hunt, ^{B1} Lewis Hancock, ^{B1} Marshall, ^{B1} McDermut, ^{B1} McGowan, ^{B1} McNair, ^{B1} Melvin, ^{B1} Hopewell, ^{B8} Porterfield, ^{B8} Stockham, ^{B7} Wedderburn, ^{B7} Picking, ^{B3} Halsey Powell, ^{B3} Uhlmann, ^{B3} Remy, ^{B2} Wadleigh, ^{B2} Norman Scott, ^{B2} Mertz ^{B2}
792–804	Callaghan, ^{B8} Cassin Young, ^{B8} Irwin, ^{B8} Preston, ^{B8} Benham, ^{B3} Cushing, ^{B3} Monssen, ^{B3} Jarvis, ^{B10} Porter, ^{B10} Colhoun, ^{B10} Gregory, ^{B10} Little, ^{B10} Rooks ^{B10}

* Initially intended for a floatplane catapult ^A Round bridge ^B Square bridge

¹ Federal Kearny ² Bath Iron Works ³ Bethlehem Staten Island ⁴ Boston NY ⁵ Charleston NY ⁶ Puget Sound NY ⁷ Bethlehem San Francisco

⁸ Bethlehem San Pedro ⁹ Gulf, Chickasaw AL ¹⁰ Seattle-Tacoma ¹¹ Consolidated, Orange TX

The Allen M. Sumner Class

The first Fletchers were still under construction when the General Board convened a new cycle of hearings in October 1941. These spawned a revised design in which three 5-inch/38 twin mounts replaced the Fletchers' five singles. Four guns could fire on forward bearings; all six at long range, with the after mount firing over the mast. To accommodate them, designers widened the Fletcher hull by 14 inches and increased standard displacement to 2,200 tons, which made possible a more generous arrangement in the engineering spaces.

Below the waterline, to reduce the Fletchers' wide turning radius, the Sumners were completed with twin rudders, which increased swept area by 17 percent. Also added were diesel generator capacity, a deckhouse that provided a passageway between the forward and after berthing quarters, and later adoption of four-bladed screws turning at reduced rpm to lessen cavitation.

The United States had already joined the war when Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox approved the new design in May 1942. Again, Federal was assigned the lead ship – *Allen M. Sumner* – and again Bath was first to lay a keel – for *Barton* on May 24, 1943, a mere two weeks after its last Fletcher.

Nineteen early Sumners received a bridge reflecting contemporary British practice but complaints that it was cramped resulted in a revised arrangement similar to that of the square-bridge Fletchers. During construction, twelve Sumners were fitted with tracks for mines and designated fast minelayers (DM) – the Robert H. Smith class.

Seventy Sumners were completed, beginning with *Barton* on December 30, 1943. All but three were commissioned during the war at an average time from keel laying of 266 days.

Allen M. Sumner class	
Hull Numbers	Names
692–709	Allen M. Sumner, ¹ Moale, ¹ Ingraham, ¹ Cooper, ¹ English, ¹ Charles S. Sperry, ¹ Ault, ¹ Waldron, ¹ Haynsworth, ¹ John W. Weeks, ¹ Hank, ¹ Wallace L. Lind, ¹ Borie, ¹ Compton, ¹ Gainard, ¹ Soley, ¹ Harlan R. Dickson, ¹ Hugh Purvis ¹
722–741	Barton, ² Walke, ² Laffey, ² O'Brien, ² Meredith, ² De Haven, ² Mansfield, ² Lyman K. Swenson, ² Collett, ² Maddox, ² Hyman, ² Mannert L. Abele, ² Purdy, ² Robert H. Smith, ^{A2} Thomas E. Fraser, ^{A2} Shannon, ^{A2} Harry F. Bauer, ^{A2} Adams, ^{A2} Tolman, ^{A2} Drexler ²
744–762	Blue, ³ Brush, ³ Taussig, ³ Samuel N. Moore, ³ Harry E. Hubbard, ³ Henry A. Wiley, ^{A3} Shea, ^{A3} J. William Ditter, ^{A3} Alfred A. Cunningham, ³ John R. Pierce, ³ Frank E. Evans, ³ John A. Bole, ³ Beatty, ³ Putnam, ⁴ Strong, ⁴ Lofberg, ⁴ John W. Thomason, ^{B4} Buck, ^{B4} Henley ^{B4}
770–781	Lowry, ⁵ Lindsey, ^{A5} Gwin, ^{A5} Aaron Ward, ^{A5} Hugh W. Hadley, ⁵ Willard Keith, ⁵ James C. Owens, ⁵ Zellars, ⁶ Massey, ⁶ Douglas H. Fox, ⁶ Stormes, ⁶ Robert K. Huntington ⁶
857	Bristol ^F

^A Destroyer–minelayer (DM 23–34) ^B Commissioned after World War II
¹ Federal Kearny ² Bath Iron Works ³ Bethlehem Staten Island ⁴ Bethlehem San Francisco ⁵ Bethlehem San Pedro ⁶ Todd Pacific

The Gearing Class

Evaluation of the Sumner design prompted another modification, differentiated as the “long hull” or Gearing class, in which 14 feet were added amidships – visible in the spacing between the stacks – to increase fuel capacity by more than 40 percent. Standard displacement rose to 2,425 tons.

One hundred fifty-two Gearings were ordered. Federal built the lead ship plus nine more at a new facility at Port Newark, New Jersey. Bath delivered the first two, *Frank Knox* and *Southerland*, in December 1944. In January 1945, in light of experience with suicide planes and the prospect of invading Japan, the first seven Gearings from Bath and the first five from Orange began undergoing conversion as radar picket destroyers (postwar classified as DDRs), which postponed their availability to the fleet by 1–2 months. Bath’s first five, which did not begin to arrive in the war zone until June 1945, were the only long-hulls that earned campaign medals during the war.

In all, 45 Gearings were commissioned before the surrender. After cancellations, 98 were completed through 1952, bringing the Fletcher–Sumner–Gearing total to 343.

Fletcher shows her beautiful lines off New York, July 18, 1942. Her high after gun tub, intended for a 1.1-inch anti-aircraft, was characteristic of the early ships of her class. *Fletcher* went to war with a 40mm twin in this position plus another on the fantail. (NARA 19-N-31245)



Gearing class	
Hull Numbers	Names
710–721	<i>Gearing</i> , ¹ <i>Eugene A. Greene</i> , ¹ <i>Gyatt</i> , ¹ <i>Kenneth D. Bailey</i> , ¹ <i>William R. Rush</i> , ^{A1} <i>William M. Wood</i> , ^{A1} <i>Wiltzie</i> , ^{A1} <i>Theodore E. Chandler</i> , ^{A1} <i>Hamner</i> , ^{A1} <i>Epperson</i> ^{A1}
742–743	<i>Frank Knox</i> , ² <i>Southerland</i> ²
763–765	<i>William C. Lawe</i> , ^{A3} <i>Lloyd Thomas</i> , ^{A3} <i>Kepler</i> ^{A3}
782–790	<i>Rowan</i> , ⁴ <i>Gurke</i> , ⁴ <i>McKean</i> , ⁴ <i>Henderson</i> , ⁴ <i>Richard B. Anderson</i> , ^{A4} <i>James E. Kyes</i> , ^{A4} <i>Hollister</i> , ^{A4} <i>Eversole</i> , ^{A4} <i>Shelton</i> ^{A4}
805–853	<i>Chevalier</i> , ² <i>Higbee</i> , ² <i>Benner</i> , ² <i>Dennis J. Buckley</i> , ² <i>Corry</i> , ^{A5} <i>New</i> , ^{A5} <i>Holder</i> , ^{A5} <i>Rich</i> , ^{A5} <i>Johnston</i> , ^{A5} <i>Robert H. McCard</i> , ^{A5} <i>Samuel B. Roberts</i> , ^{A5} <i>Basilone</i> , ^{A5} <i>Carpenter</i> , ^{A5} <i>Agerholm</i> , ^{A2} <i>Robert A. Owens</i> , ^{A2} <i>Timmerman</i> , ^{A2} <i>Myles C. Fox</i> , ² <i>Everett F. Larson</i> , ² <i>Goodrich</i> , ² <i>Hanson</i> , ² <i>Herbert J. Thomas</i> , ² <i>Turner</i> , ² <i>Charles P. Cecil</i> , ² <i>George K. MacKenzie</i> , ² <i>Sarsfield</i> , ² <i>Ernest G. Small</i> , ² <i>Power</i> , ^{A2} <i>Glennon</i> , ^{A2} <i>Noa</i> , ^{A2} <i>Fiske</i> , ^{A2} <i>Warrington</i> , ^{A2} <i>Perry</i> , ^{A2} <i>Baussell</i> , ^{A2} <i>Ozbourn</i> , ^{A2} <i>Robert L. Wilson</i> , ^{A2} <i>Witek</i> , ^{A2} <i>Richard E. Kraus</i> , ^{A2} <i>Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.</i> , ^{A6} <i>Rupertus</i> , ^{A6} <i>Leonard F. Mason</i> , ^{A6} <i>Charles H. Roan</i> ^{A6}
858–890	<i>Fred T. Berry</i> , ^{A7} <i>Norris</i> , ⁷ <i>McCaffery</i> , ⁷ <i>Harwood</i> , ^{A7} <i>Vogelgesang</i> , ⁸ <i>Steinaker</i> , ⁸ <i>Harold J. Ellison</i> , ⁸ <i>Charles R. Ware</i> , ⁸ <i>Cone</i> , ⁸ <i>Stribling</i> , ^{A8} <i>Brownson</i> , ^{A8} <i>Arnold J. Isbell</i> , ^{A8} <i>Fechteler</i> , ^{A8} <i>Damato</i> , ^{A8} <i>Forrest Royal</i> , ^{A8} <i>Hawkins</i> , ⁵ <i>Duncan</i> , ⁵ <i>Henry W. Tucker</i> , ⁵ <i>Rogers</i> , ⁵ <i>Perkins</i> , ⁵ <i>Vesole</i> , ⁵ <i>Leary</i> , ⁵ <i>Dyess</i> , ⁵ <i>Bordelon</i> , ⁵ <i>Furse</i> , ⁵ <i>Newman K. Perry</i> , ⁵ <i>Floyd B. Parks</i> , ⁵ <i>John R. Craig</i> , ⁵ <i>Orleck</i> , ^{A5} <i>Brinkley Bass</i> , ^{A5} <i>Stickell</i> , ^{A5} <i>O'Hare</i> , ^{A5} <i>Meredith</i> ^{A5}

^A Commissioned after World War II ¹ Federal Port Newark ² Bath Iron Works ³ Bethlehem San Francisco ⁴ Todd Pacific ⁵ Consolidated, Orange TX ⁶ Bethlehem Quincy ⁷ Bethlehem San Pedro ⁸ Bethlehem Staten Island

DESTROYERS IN ACTION

Guadalcanal

On August 7, 1942, two months after the battle of Midway, an amphibious force under Rear Admiral Richmond K. (“Kelly”) Turner landed Marines on Guadalcanal (code named “Cactus”) in the remote British Solomon Islands. There the Japanese were constructing an airstrip from which they could have threatened Allied lines of supply to Australia and New Zealand. The ultimate objective of this Operation *Watchtower* was seizure of the major Japanese base at Rabaul, 650 miles northwest in the Bismarck Archipelago. The first six months, however, were consumed by the fight for the Marines’ new Henderson Field. In it, each side sought to reinforce its own ground forces while preventing the enemy from doing the same – the Americans by day at first and the Japanese in night-time runs soon known as the “Tokyo Express.”

The result was a stalemate. By mid-October, however, US surface forces had become vulnerable to daylight air attack and, thanks to the Allies’

“beat Germany first” strategy, were so stretched for resources that bluejackets had nicknamed it Operation “Shoestring.” A switch to night operations set the stage for the type of surface warfare for which the Japanese had carefully prepared: with superior optics, pyrotechnics, and torpedoes, and experience in using them, they threatened to gain control of the sea. Against this, the US Navy threw cruiser–destroyer task forces. These were normally commanded by a rear admiral riding in a cruiser, who regarded his 6- or 8-inch guns as the primary weapon and deployed his ships accordingly, with destroyers attached in the van and rear, from where they could use their torpedoes for close-in defense.

Two months into *Watchtower*, *Nicholas*, *O’Bannon*, and *Fletcher* arrived – the latter

No one drilled harder than the 5-inch gun crews, who used a practice loading machine mounted on deck. A typical projectile weighed about 55 lb; a brass cartridge case weighed another 28 lb. The loading process varied with gun elevation. By the time a new ship entered the war zone, gun crews could fire 20 shells per minute. *Nicholas*, 1943. (NARA 80-G-52854)



under Commander William M. Cole, who had just completed a tour working on radar at the Naval Research Laboratory, which made him an ideal choice to command the name ship of this highly visible new class. During training as *Fletcher* crossed the Pacific, he and his executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Joseph C. Wylie, Jr., began to rethink their equipment arrangement and use of personnel in battle to capitalize on the SG's full potential.

The Battle of Guadalcanal

In the early hours of November 13, *O'Bannon* and *Fletcher* were in the formation when Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan's Task Force 67 – four destroyers in the van followed by five cruisers and then four more destroyers in column – stood into soon-to-be-named “Ironbottom Sound” off Guadalcanal to intercept a vastly superior bombardment force that included two battleships. The two forces intermingled before opening fire. In the ensuing 30-minute melee, Admiral Callaghan was killed and cruiser *Atlanta* and four destroyers were sunk, but the Japanese lost battleship *Hiei* and two destroyers, and withdrew.

Although they were poorly utilized, the two 2,100-tonners fought effectively. Last among the van destroyers, *O'Bannon* fired three torpedoes at *Hiei* from 1,200 yards and emerged from the battle with little damage. Last in line overall, Commander Cole in *Fletcher* used his radar to open gun and torpedo fire without damage. After the battle, the two destroyers joined cruisers *Helena*, *San Francisco*, and *Juneau* plus 1,500-tonner *Sterett* in retiring and were still in company the following day when *Juneau* was torpedoed by a submarine and sunk.

Together with a battleship action two nights later, the battle of Guadalcanal wrested the initiative from the Japanese and prompted President Roosevelt to comment that it seemed the war's turning point had been reached.

The Battle of Tassafaronga

Two and a half weeks later, on November 30, the Tokyo Express stood in again from Bougainville with eight destroyers, six of which carried drums of provisions to be dumped overboard near Guadalcanal's Tassafaronga (Tasivarongo) Point. In anticipation, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. ordered Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright to intercept with a reconstituted Task Force 67. Wright, who had assumed command only two days before, adopted an operations plan left by his predecessor, Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid. He placed *Fletcher* in the van with 1,500-tonners *Perkins*, *Maury*, and *Drayton*, to stand 4,000 yards on the engaged bow of his cruiser formation and attack with torpedoes when ordered. His five cruisers followed, with destroyers *Lamson* and *Lardner* attached en route.



TOP

Chow line. With 330 or more officers and men on board, food was always being served on a wartime destroyer.

Nicholas, 1943. (NARA 80-G-52058)

BELOW

Mess deck, with berths stowed.

Nicholas, 1943. (NARA 80-G-51696)

B

On April 16, 1945, *Laffey* was the lone destroyer assigned to radar picket station No. 1, 50 miles north of the Okinawa transport area (see page 38), when her radar operator began counting 50 bogies closing fast. Attacked by 22 Japanese bombers and suicide aircraft over the following 80 minutes, she splashed nine enemy planes but was struck by five kamikazes and four bombs. Three other planes and a Corsair of her CAP also grazed her; near misses caused additional damage.

Repaired at Seattle by September, *Laffey* remained in commission until 1947. During a second period in commission, 1951–75, she was modified from her late-World War II appearance. In 1981, *Laffey* was placed on display at the Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, Mount Pleasant, South Carolina and is the only remaining Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer.

HULL AND TOPSIDES

1. Rudders
2. Starboard propeller
3. Propeller guard
4. Depth charge track
5. 20mm single mounts
6. 5-inch/38 twin mount
7. "K-gun" depth charge projectors
8. Quintuple 21-inch torpedo tube mounts
9. Torpedo loading crane
10. 40mm quad mount
11. Mark 51 40mm gun director
12. 20mm single mount
13. SC air search radar antenna
14. SG surface search radar antenna
15. Mark 22 height-finding radar antenna
16. Mark 12 fire control radar antenna
17. Mark 37 gun director
18. Navigating bridge
19. Floater net basket
20. 5-inch/38 twin mounts
21. Sonar

INTERIOR

22. Captain's sea cabin
23. Pilot house
24. Unit commander's cabin
25. Chart house
26. Combat Information Center
27. Boiler uptakes
28. Boiler
29. orward fireroom
30. Forward engine room
31. After fireroom
32. After engine room





Life on board was crowded, especially in the enlisted men's washroom. *Nicholas*, 1943. (NARA 80-G-56063)

The battle began when Commander Cole conned *Fletcher* into a favorable position for a torpedo attack and requested permission to execute. Four critical minutes passed before Admiral Wright granted it, however; then, a minute later – before any torpedoes could have hit – he ordered his cruisers to open gunfire. Japanese destroyer *Takanami* was sunk but, in keeping with their own doctrine, other Japanese destroyers maneuvered on their own initiative, launched torpedoes, and escaped. The result: heavy cruisers *Minneapolis*, *New Orleans*, and *Pensacola* were damaged and *Northampton* sunk (*Fletcher* rescued 742 survivors and *Drayton* 128).

In his action report, Admiral Wright praised his cruisers' gunnery performance but criticized his destroyers for wasting torpedoes, a view Admiral Halsey unfortunately endorsed, and as 1943 began, task force commanders continued to tie destroyers closely to their cruiser formations during combined night operations. With fresh experience from the two November battles, meanwhile, *Fletcher's* officers took to their motor whaleboat to brief other destroyers about using the SG in action and in June 1943, when a new "Combat Information Center" (C.I.C.) school was established at Pearl Harbor, Lieutenant Commander Wylie was brought in to author the first *C.I.C. Handbook for Destroyers* for distribution throughout the US and Royal Navies.

"Shoestring" conclusion

On December 11, Captain Robert P. Briscoe, ComDesRon 5, embarked in *Fletcher* and made her his flagship for Task Unit 31.2, the "Cactus Striking



Mail call on the fantail. *Nicholas*, 1943. (NARA 80-G-57615)

Force,” operating under Admiral Turner’s direct orders. Joined by *Nicholas*, *O’Bannon*, and the newly arrived *Radford* and *De Haven*, the striking force operated in Guadalcanal waters into the new year. On January 24, 1943, *Radford* was credited as the first ship to shoot down an enemy plane under full radar control without sighting it. On February 1, *De Haven* was sunk in an air raid – the first 2,100-tonner lost.

Other 2,100-tonners, too, began arriving following their detachment from supporting Operation *Torch*, the invasion of North Africa in November. On January 29–30, *Chevalier*, *Conway*, *La Vallette*, *Taylor*, and *Waller* were screening a cruiser formation near Rennell Island south of Guadalcanal when Japanese torpedo planes attacked twice, sinking cruiser *Chicago* and torpedoing *La Vallette*.

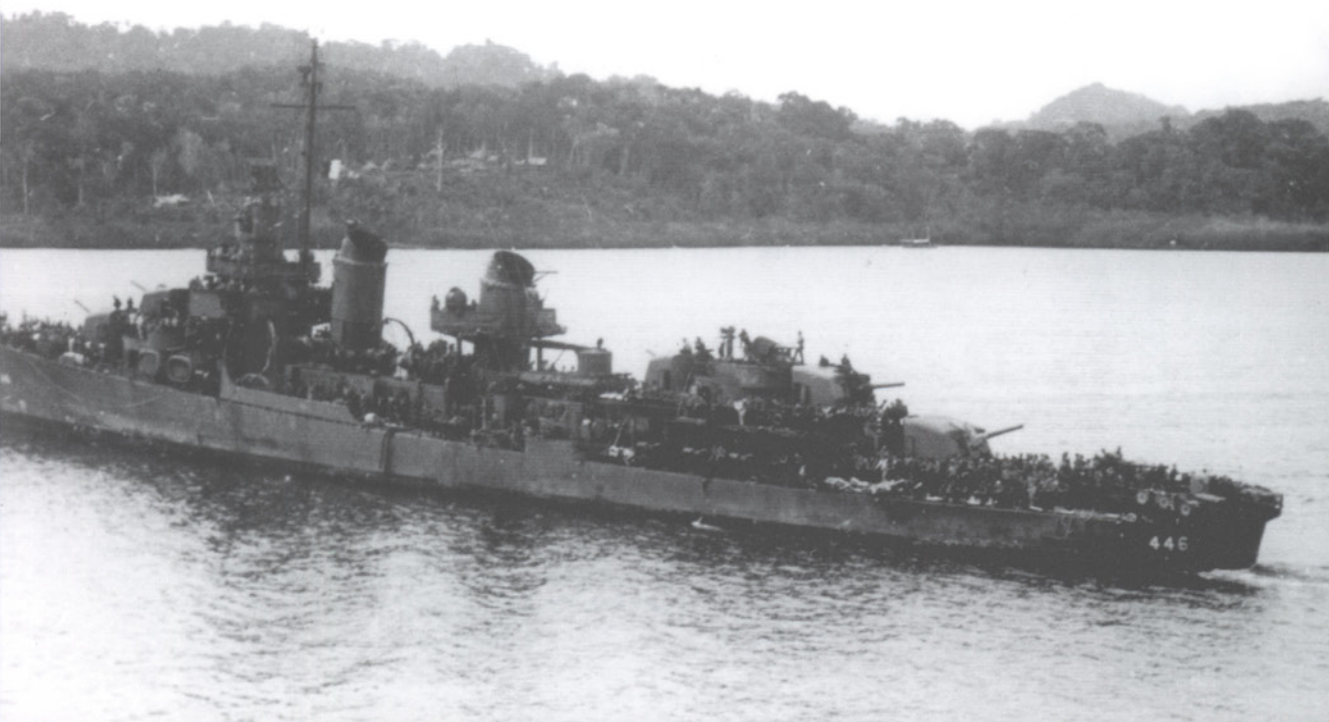
Little more than a week later, on February 8, the Tokyo Express completed the evacuation of Guadalcanal.

New Georgia

Admiral Halsey now looked toward the New Georgia group of islands, the next major step up the Solomon Islands chain. Joining him were two new task force commanders, Rear Admiral Walden L. (“Pug”) Ainsworth and Rear Admiral A. S. (“Tip”) Merrill. Each commanded a division of four light cruisers, all of which mounted 12 or 15 6-inch guns, which were capable of a tremendous volume of firepower. On March 13 the US Navy was reorganized, with Halsey’s South Pacific Force designated as the Third Fleet. Within it, the first two nine-ship squadrons of 2,100-tonners were attached: DesRon 21 to Ainsworth’s Task Force 37 and DesRon 22 to Merrill’s Task Force 38.

Commanding DesDiv 43 under Admiral Merrill was Commander Arleigh A. Burke, who had arrived in the theater on February 5. A voracious reader, newcomer Burke studied the action reports from Tassafaronga. From these, he gleaned what Commander Cole had seen: that destroyers could use their weapons to best advantage only if allowed to maneuver independently, as waiting for orders took too much time.

Radford distinguished herself by rescuing 468 *Helena* survivors after the battle of Kula Gulf. Still deep in enemy waters at sunrise the morning after the battle, she and *Nicholas* raced home at 36 knots to Tulagi Harbor, where cruiser crews manned the rails in salute as they stood in. Both ships were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for this action. (Courtesy Vane Scott, USS *Radford* National Naval Museum, Newcomerstown, Ohio)



Fletcher-class destroyer squadrons formed in March 1943¹

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 21 ²	DesDiv 41	<i>Chevalier</i> , <i>Nicholas</i> , ^F <i>O'Bannon</i> , <i>Strong</i> , <i>Taylor</i>
	DesDiv 42	<i>Fletcher</i> , ^D <i>Jenkins</i> , <i>La Vallette</i> , <i>Radford</i>
DesRon 22 ³	DesDiv 43	<i>Philip</i> , <i>Pringle</i> , <i>Renshaw</i> , <i>Saufley</i> , <i>Waller</i> ^F
	DesDiv 44	<i>Conway</i> , ^D <i>Cony</i> , <i>Eaton</i> , <i>Sigourney</i>

^F Squadron flagship ^D Division flagship

¹ *De Haven* was lost before squadrons were formed.

² *Hopewell* and *Howorth* later joined DesRon 21 as replacements for *Strong* and *Chevalier*.

³ *Converse* was originally attached to DesDiv 44 but was reassigned to DesRon 23 in October 1943, when *Sigourney* replaced her in DesRon 22.

Up the "Slot"

The two admirals were already leading offensive operations northwest into New Georgia Sound, by then known as the "Slot." Back on January 5, Admiral Halsey had dispatched Admiral Ainsworth to bombard an airstrip 200 miles northwest at Munda Point on New Georgia Island; on January 24, the target was the Vila Plantation on nearby Kolombangara Island, through which Munda was being supplied. On March 5, the two task forces had operated together: while Admiral Ainsworth bombarded Munda from the south, Admiral Merrill, with Commander Burke embarked in *Waller*, entered Kula Gulf to the north. There, *Waller* torpedoed one of two Japanese destroyers surprised and sunk by her bombardment group.

On May 8, while Ainsworth and Merrill's task forces made another bombardment run, *Radford* escorted flush-deck minelayers *Preble*, *Gamble*, and *Breese* in laying strings of mines across Blackett Strait, the western approach to Vila. These promptly sank one Japanese destroyer and damaged two others, which aircraft later finished off.

Finally, on June 30, the twofold Operation *Cartwheel* against Rabaul got under way. Operating from eastern New Guinea, "MacArthur's Navy," the yet-small Seventh Fleet under Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, moved northwest toward the Bismarck Sea while in the Solomons, Rear Admiral Turner under Halsey moved against the New Georgia island group.

The Battles of Kula Gulf and Kolombangara

While Admiral Turner landed at Rendova Island, Admirals Ainsworth and Merrill continued their runs up the Slot, where Ainsworth found the enemy. On the night of July 5, as his force of cruisers *Honolulu*, *Helena*, and *St. Louis* with DesDiv 41's *Nicholas*, *Strong*, *Chevalier*, and *O'Bannon*

C

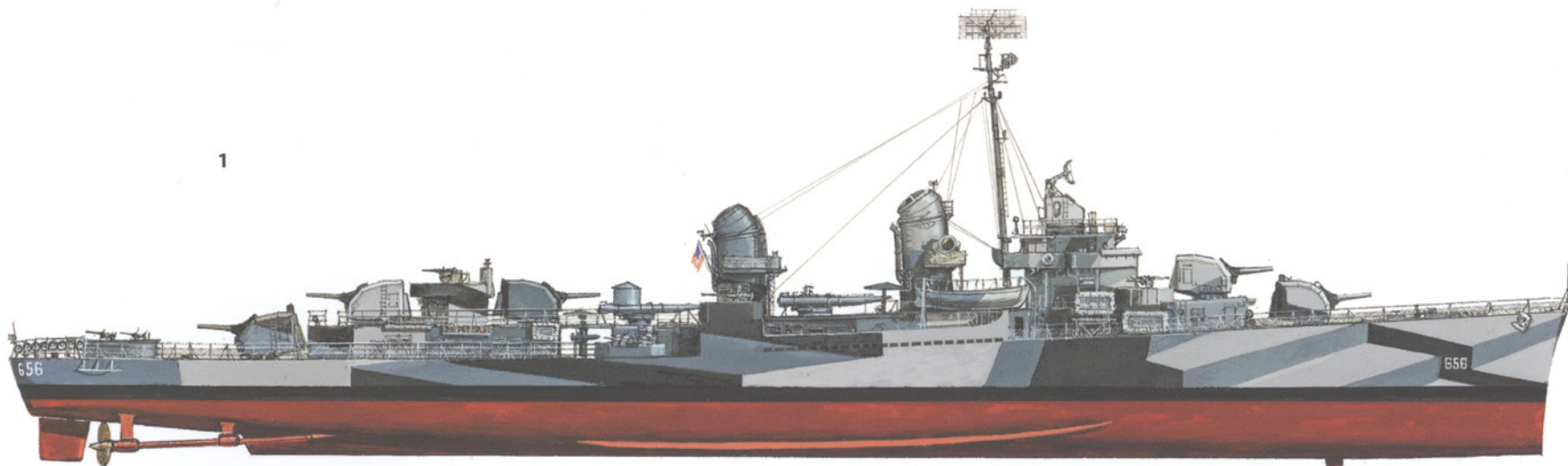
1) USS VAN VALKENBURGH (DD 656), 1945

Flagship of DesRon 58, *Van Valkenburgh* logged 63 consecutive days on station at Okinawa and earned a Navy Unit Commendation for defeating all enemy efforts to destroy her. The square-bridge "Van" also had an ice-cream machine, a piano, and a dog that gave birth to puppies on the way home from the war. Here she appears as built in camouflage Measure 31/9D.

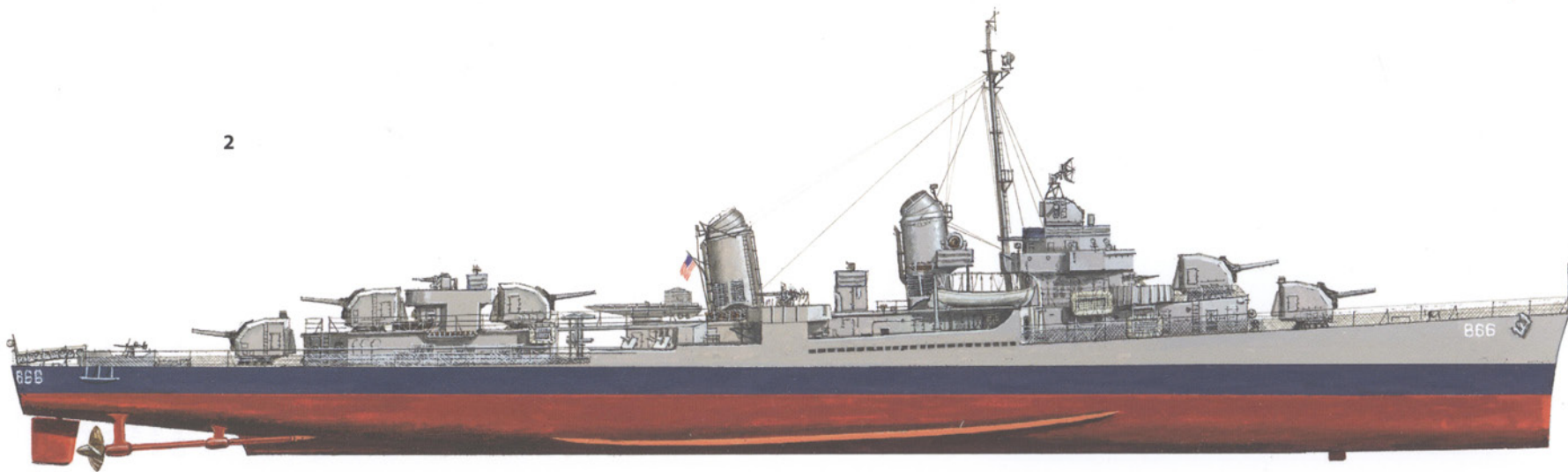
2) USS CLARENCE K. BRONSON (DD 668), 1945

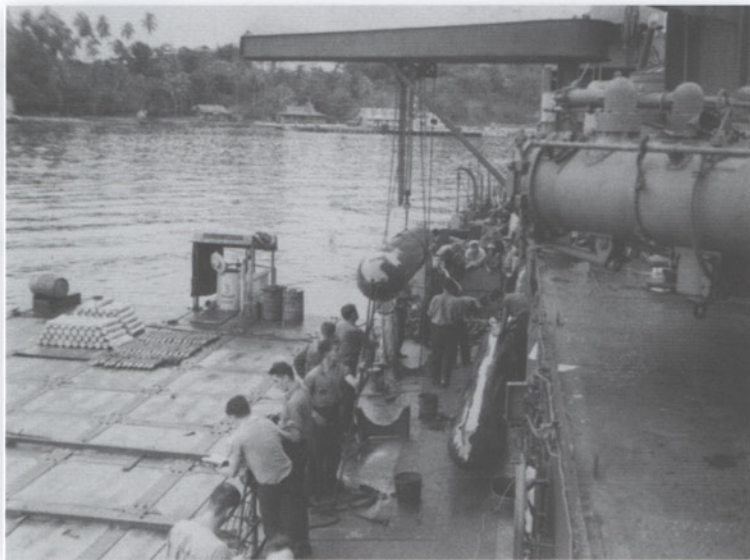
Among the Fletchers that received the "emergency" anti-kamikaze fit in 1945, in which the forward bank of torpedo tubes was replaced by a pair of 40mm quads, were the five destroyers of Division 99. Here, DesRon 50 flagship *Clarence K. Bronson* appears in camouflage Measure 22. Like many destroyers late in the Pacific war, she carries her hull numbers high on the bow.

1



2





Torpedo cranes were used often in the Solomon Islands. Here at Tulagi, *Nicholas* replenishes torpedoes after the battle of Kula Gulf. (NARA 80-G-57600)

completed a bombardment run off Bairoko Harbor in Kula Gulf, *Strong* was hit by a “Long Lance” torpedo fired by undetected destroyers 11 miles distant. She sank as *Chevalier* took off her crew while *O'Bannon* answered shore battery fire.

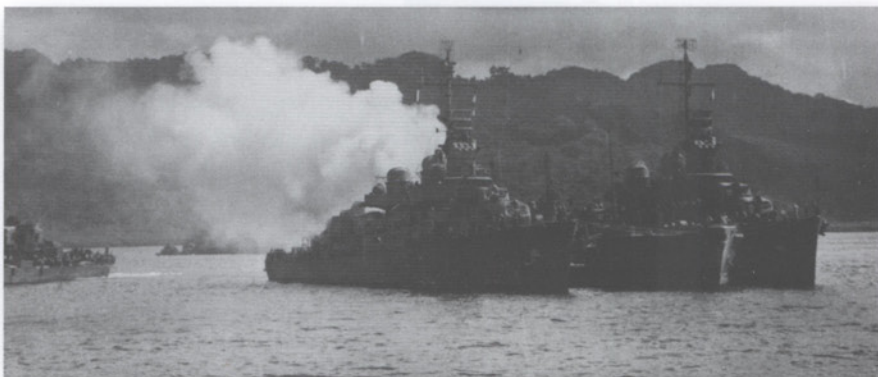
En route home, Ainsworth reversed course on new orders from Halsey, exchanged *Chevalier* for *Jenkins* and *Radford*, and that next night caught a 10-destroyer Tokyo Express just as it stood into Kula Gulf. His gunfire sank flagship *Niizuki* and damaged five other destroyers but he lost *Helena* to three more Long Lances. In

retiring, he left behind *Nicholas* and *Radford*, which held off enemy destroyers until dawn while rescuing nearly two-thirds of *Helena*'s crew.

On the 12–13th Ainsworth, with the New Zealand cruiser *Leander* replacing *Helena* as well as ten destroyers – DesRon 21's *Nicholas*, *O'Bannon*, *Taylor*, *Radford*, and *Jenkins* in the van – intercepted another southbound Japanese force and again sank the flagship, cruiser *Jintsu*, in exchange for a torpedo hit on *Leander*. The battle was not over, however. Ainsworth sent *Nicholas*, *O'Bannon*, and *Taylor* in pursuit of the enemy but then lost track of them and hesitated to open fire when pips reappeared on his radar. These pips then turned and ran, suggesting an enemy force that had just fired torpedoes. Before he could react, *Honolulu* and *St. Louis* were also hit and 1,630-ton destroyer *Gwin* was sunk.

Battles off Vella Lavella

Late July saw multiple changes. Rear Admiral Theodore S. Wilkinson replaced Admiral Turner as amphibious force commander; Destroyer Squadron 23 arrived to replace DesRon 22 in Merrill's task force; and reports of the capabilities of a dissected Japanese torpedo were circulated: the Americans were up against a weapon of unsuspected power and speed, and, with Ainsworth's cruisers out of action, the only cruisers remaining in the theater – Merrill's – must not be risked. Happily, there was also news that the

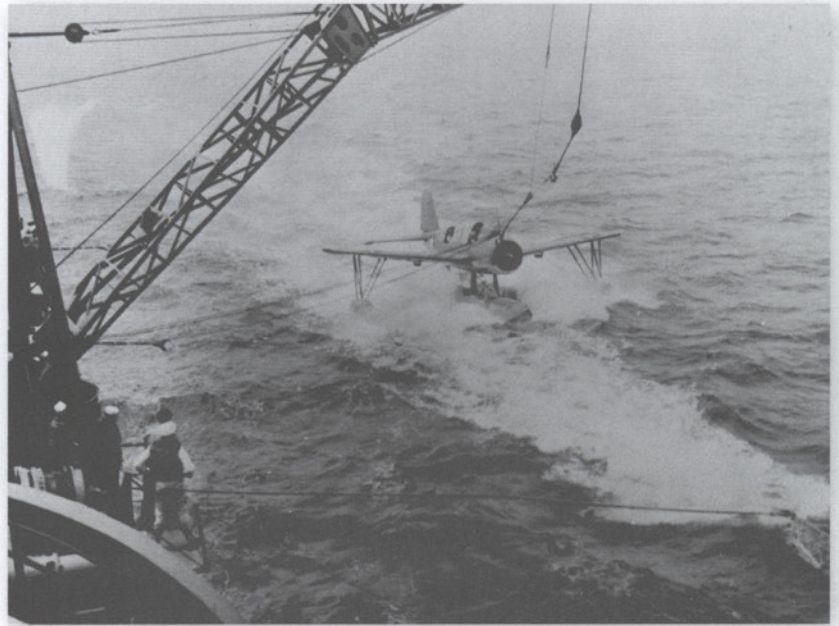


Destroyer Squadron 22 flagship *Waller* (center) and *Philip* refuel at Purvis Bay, Solomon Islands, July 25, 1943. (NARA 80-G-56739)

American torpedo problems had at last been identified and fixed.

On July 29, Commander Burke took over the striking force, now a group of 1,500-tonners, for which he devised a battle plan reflecting his earlier analyses. On August 3, Commander Frederick Moosbrugger relieved Burke and promptly applied his predecessor's plan at the battle of Vella Gulf, August 6–7, in a superb victory, which vindicated the independent use of destroyers on the offensive and drew attention to the importance of an efficient C.I.C.

Munda had fallen the previous day. For his next operation, Admiral Halsey adopted a new strategy: bypassing Kolombangara in favor of undefended Vella Lavella. On August 14, while DesDivs 41 and 43 covered, *Taylor* led flush-deck destroyer-transport in a landing at Barakoma. From then into October, Squadrons 21, 22, and 23 – this last in its debut – ran up the Slot in various combinations to disrupt destroyer and barge traffic trying to evacuate the two islands. On August 18, DesDiv 41 found the enemy off Vella Lavella's north coast and gave battle without result. Other encounters followed, climaxing on October 7 when 1,850-tonner *Selfridge* with *Chevalier* and *O'Bannon* took on six enemy destroyers. *Chevalier* sank *Yugumo* but was herself torpedoed and then lost after *O'Bannon* rammed her.



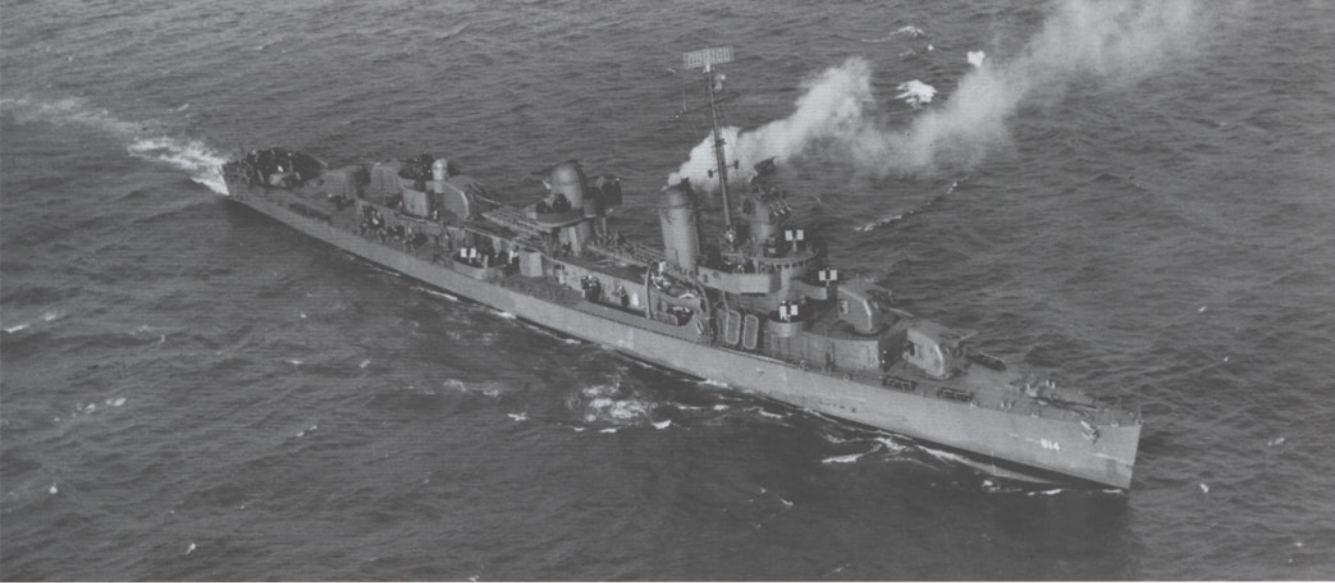
Catapulting a floatplane was one thing; recovering it was another. Here in 1943 a Vought OS2U Kingfisher taxis up to Stevens' sea sled during a test of the ship's aircraft handling gear. (NARA 80-G-299540)

Bougainville

The end of October brought the detachment of DesRon 21 from the South Pacific and the return of now-Captain Arleigh Burke to command Squadron 23. Back under his old boss, Admiral Merrill, Burke lobbied to allow his "Little Beavers" to operate offensively under a "doctrine of faith": as soon as they sighted the enemy, they would close without orders to fire their torpedoes and then stand clear of the cruisers' gunfire.

The Battle of Empress Augusta Bay

The invasion of Bougainville followed a week later. While the newly-arrived DesRon 45 plus three Squadron 22 veterans supported landings at Cape Torokina on Empress Augusta Bay, only 200 miles from Rabaul, Merrill and Burke launched a tightly-scheduled diversion. Just after midnight on November 1, Merrill's four cruisers and eight destroyers bombarded airfields near the Buka Passage 50 miles north of the beachhead; the following day, they hit the Shortland Islands 70 miles south of it. Then, after Burke with DesDiv 45 (*Charles Ausburne*, *Dyson*, *Stanly*, and *Claxton*) ran south to Hathorn Sound to replenish, Merrill turned his task force north again, with his destroyers ready to attack independently with torpedoes if the enemy appeared as expected.



In mid-1943, production of 40mm twins had not yet caught up to demand. In an interim arrangement, one 20mm single was mounted on the flying bridge and another on a platform forward of the pilot house, easily seen in this photo of *Thatcher*. (NARA 80-G-36537)

Off Empress Augusta Bay in the early hours of November 2, Merrill's cruisers quietly crossed ahead of a more powerful Japanese formation and withheld gunfire while first DesDiv 45 and then DesDiv 46 (*Spence*, *Thatcher*, *Converse*, and *Foote*) detached to close the enemy's flanks. Too soon, the Japanese altered course to give battle and most of the Little Beavers' torpedoes missed. Amid the confusion, however, Merrill opened fire and then expertly maneuvered his cruisers in a series of turns to avoid any enemy torpedoes until the Japanese retired. Carrier strikes on Rabaul over the next days broke up a heavy cruiser force assembling there and prevented the need for a repeat performance by Merrill against what would've been much steeper odds.

Always studying: Captain Arleigh Burke on the bridge wing of his DesRon 23 flagship *Charles* ("Charlie") *Ausburne* in late 1943 with the Little Beaver mascot painted outboard, forward of the life ring. (NH 59854)

The Battle of Cape St. George

Three weeks later, Commodore Burke earned his own signal victory against the Tokyo Express. *Spence's* No. 4 boiler was out of commission, which limited her best speed to 31 knots, but her skipper appealed to Burke to let him come. Burke radioed his intentions to Halsey's staff, who began the reply message with "padding" that made light of the problem of the moment: FOR 31-KNOT BURKE ... GET ATHWART THE BUKA-RABAUL EVACUATION LINE ...

IF ENEMY CONTACT YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO ...

"31-knot" Burke did. In the waters northwest of Bougainville in the early morning of November 25, Thanksgiving Day, he executed a masterpiece of both planning and finesse, in which he ambushed two Japanese formations. First his own DesDiv 45 (*Charles Ausburne*, *Dyson*, and *Claxton*) torpedoed two destroyers and left them in sinking condition, to be finished off by DesDiv 46 (*Converse* and *Spence*). Then he took off after three more approaching Japanese destroyers, which fled north. Altering course during the chase on the strength of intuition alone, he dodged an enemy





torpedo spread before overhauling and sinking one of the three. Finally, after extending his pursuit to within an hour's steaming of New Ireland Island's Cape St. George, he turned back.

Cartwheel conclusion

Back in August 1943, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill had agreed that Operation *Cartwheel's* objective should no longer be to seize Rabaul – with its 100,000 defenders – but to bypass and isolate it. By December, Vice Admiral Kinkaid and DesRon 24 had arrived from Alaska (see next page) to join the Seventh Fleet in time for landings at Cape Gloucester in western New Britain, where *Brownson* was lost. In February 1944, DesRons 22 and 45 supported the occupation of the Green Islands east of Rabaul. Later that month, they and Squadron 23 made sweeps into the Bismarcks while General MacArthur landed at Manus in the Admiralty Islands to the northwest. MacArthur completed his occupation on March 18; two days later, Admiral Wilkinson landed at nearby Emirau, closing the ring around Rabaul.

Charles Ausburne, Dyson, and Claxton engage and sink the Japanese destroyer Yugiri in The Little Beavers at the battle of Cape St. George by the aviation artist R. G. Smith. (Courtesy of Ms. Sharlyn Marsh, rgsmithart.com)

In early 1944, *Halford* (foreground) lobbed a few shells at a wooden watchtower in the Shortland Islands south of Bougainville. Before *Bennett* (background) could join in, she was straddled by 6-inch return fire. Admiral Halsey later sent the "naughty boys" a message saying the installation was already known and did not pose a threat. (NARA 80-G-K-1638)



The North Pacific

The South Pacific was not the only Pacific front. The great circle route from Alaska through the Kurile Islands to northern Japan also beckoned, but the Aleutian Islands' notoriously bad weather made operations difficult. Back in May 1943, the 7th Infantry Division had assaulted Attu in DesRon 24's debut, which ended badly when *Abner Read's* stern was blown off by a mine. In August it moved on to Kiska, which the Japanese had already evacuated.

That ended the campaign. Further naval operations were limited to nuisance raids and anti-shipping sweeps. In late November 1943, when DesRon 24 was ordered south to join the Seventh Fleet, DesRon 49 relieved it until it, in turn, was ordered south for the Philippines operations in 1944. DesRon 57 then arrived and its DesDiv 114 remained through June 1945, when it conducted a last sweep into the Sea of Okhotsk.

Fletcher-class destroyer squadrons formed in mid-1943

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 23	DesDiv 45	<i>Aulick, Charles Ausburne,</i> ⁵ <i>Claxton, Dyson, Stanly</i>
	DesDiv 46	<i>Converse, Foote, Spence, Thatcher</i>
DesRon 24*	DesDiv 47 ¹	<i>Bache, Beale, Brownson, Daly, Hutchins</i> ⁵
	DesDiv 48	<i>Abner Read,</i> ⁰ <i>Ammen, Bush, Mullany</i>
DesRon 25	DesDiv 49	<i>Harrison, John Rodgers,</i> ⁵ <i>McKee, Murray, Stevens</i>
	DesDiv 50	<i>Dashiell, Ringgold, Schroeder, Sigsbee</i>
DesRon 45	DesDiv 89	<i>Bennett, Fullam,</i> ⁵ <i>Guest, Halford, Hudson</i>
	DesDiv 90	<i>Anthony, Braine, Terry, Wadsworth</i>

⁵ Initial and/or long-term squadron flagship ⁰ Initial and/or long-term division flagship

¹ Killen was assigned to replace *Brownson* *Initially deployed to the Aleutian Islands

The Central Pacific

In 1941, when construction of the Fletchers began, keels were also laid for the big new Essex-class carriers. In the summer of 1943, these finally began to arrive at Pearl Harbor. There, on August 5, Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance took command of the Fifth Fleet and prepared to advance across the Pacific. Joined by the new DesRon 25, he began with a "break in" raid on Marcus Island on September 1 and then one on Wake in October. By November, with 11 fast carriers, he was ready to begin his drive westward toward the Philippines in which each operation would rank as the largest concentration of naval power the world had ever seen – until the next one.

Micronesia

Admiral Spruance's first step was Operation *Galvanic*, the seizure of Makin and Tarawa Atolls in the Gilbert Islands, November 10–December 10, 1943. Fletchers on hand included Squadrons 25 and 47 with Admiral Turner's amphibious forces and Squadrons 46 and 48 – as well as Squadron 21 en route home from the Solomons – with the carriers. Makin fell with relative ease. Tarawa, however, was a near catastrophe for the Marines,

Underway replenishment was routine in the Pacific and made it possible for thirsty destroyers to operate over long distances without bases. Here *Nicholas* refuels from oiler *Sabine* in 1943. (NARA 80-G-57656)



Fletcher-class destroyer squadrons joining the Pacific war in late 1943

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 46	DesDiv 91	<i>Bell, Burns, Charrette, Conner, Izard</i> ⁵
	DesDiv 92	<i>Boyd, Bradford, Brown, Cowell</i>
DesRon 47	DesDiv 93	<i>Hazelwood, Heermann, Hoel, McCord,</i> ⁵ <i>Trathen</i>
	DesDiv 94	<i>Franks, Haggard, Hailey, Johnston</i>
DesRon 48	DesDiv 95	<i>Abbot, Erben,</i> ⁵ <i>Hale, Stembel, Walker</i>
	DesDiv 96	<i>Black, Bullard, Chauncey, Kidd</i>
DesRon 49*	DesDiv 97	<i>Picking,</i> ⁵ <i>Sproston, Wickes, William D. Porter, Young</i>
	DesDiv 98	<i>Charles J. Badger, Isherwood, Kimberly, Luce</i>

⁵ Initial and/or long-term squadron flagship

*Initially deployed to the Aleutian Islands

and it revealed multiple weaknesses. One of these was naval gunfire support, which Admiral Turner felt could be improved by 50 percent.

Operation *Flintlock* followed: an assault on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, January 29–February 7, 1944. Joining Admiral Turner's Joint Expeditionary Force were five destroyers from Squadron 51, while Squadrons 50 and 52 were added to the Fast Carrier Force, now under Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher. The Marshalls proved to be the easiest amphibious operation of the war, thanks to the lessons learned in the Gilberts as well as a great disparity in strength between the attacking and defending forces. Here, too, Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) were first deployed.

So successful was *Flintlock* that Admiral Turner continued on to Eniwetok after only a week of planning (Operation *Catchpole*, January 31–March 4). In addition to providing support, Admiral Mitscher took time out for a two-day strike on Truk (Operation *Hailstone*, February 17–18), during which DesRon 46's *Izard*, *Charette*, *Burns*, and *Bradford* screened battleships and cruisers in sinking enemy cruiser *Katori* and two destroyers.

Fletcher-class destroyer squadrons joining the Pacific war in early 1944

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 50	DesDiv 99	<i>Clarence K. Bronson,</i> ⁵ <i>Cotten, Dortch, Gatling, Healy</i>
	DesDiv 100	<i>Caperton, Cogswell, Ingersoll, Knapp</i>
DesRon 51	DesDiv 101	<i>Hall,</i> ⁵ <i>Halligan, Haraden, Paul Hamilton, Twiggs</i>
	DesDiv 102	<i>Capps, David W. Taylor, Evans, John D. Henley</i>
DesRon 52	DesDiv 103	<i>Miller, Owen,</i> ⁵ <i>Stephen Potter, The Sullivans, Tingey</i>
	DesDiv 104	<i>Hickox, Hunt, Lewis Hancock, Marshall</i>

⁵ Squadron flagship

Squadrons 53–56 joined the Fifth Fleet for Operation *Forager* against the Mariana Islands, which commenced on June 13 with the bombardment of Saipan. Vice Admiral Turner landed on the 15th; the island fell three weeks later.

The Japanese Mobile Fleet appeared on the 19th but in the two-day battle of the Philippine Sea – the “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot” – lost more than 90 percent of its air wing to Spruance's juggernaut, ending its effectiveness as



ABOVE

"Lifejackets? We never wore them just for this!" An unidentified Fletcher, possibly *Smalley*, fuels from battleship *Wisconsin* late in the war. (NARA 80-G-306191)



ABOVE RIGHT

High-line transfers were a way of life at sea, where destroyers sometimes operated without dropping anchor for many weeks at a time. Here a man is pulled across from an unidentified Fletcher. (NARA 80-G-K-5624)

a carrier force. Fifteen American carriers participated in the battle with destroyers of Squadrons 23, 45, and 50–53 in the screen. It ended with a long-range strike late on the 20th and Vice Admiral Mitscher's memorable order to "turn on the lights" to guide his planes home after dark. Destroyers illuminated the formation with star shells and rescued pilots who had run out of fuel.

On July 21, Turner landed on Guam and then on Tinian. In late November, American B-29 bombers began to fly missions from the Marianas against the Japanese homeland.

Fletcher-class destroyer squadrons joining the Pacific war in mid-1944

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 53	DesDiv 105	<i>Benham</i> , <i>Colahan</i> , ⁵ <i>Cushing</i> , ¹ <i>Halsey Powell</i> , ¹ <i>Uhlmann</i>
	DesDiv 106	<i>Stockham</i> , <i>Twining</i> , <i>Wedderburn</i> , <i>Yarnall</i>
DesRon 54	DesDiv 107	<i>McGowan</i> , <i>Melvin</i> , <i>Mertz</i> , <i>Norman Scott</i> , <i>Remey</i> ⁵
	DesDiv 108	<i>McDermut</i> , <i>McNair</i> , <i>Monssen</i> , <i>Wadleigh</i>
DesRon 55	DesDiv 109	<i>Callaghan</i> , <i>Cassin Young</i> , <i>Irwin</i> , <i>Porterfield</i> , ⁵ <i>Preston</i>
	DesDiv 110	<i>Laws</i> , <i>Longshaw</i> , <i>Morrison</i> , <i>Prichett</i>
DesRon 56	DesDiv 111	<i>Bennion</i> , <i>Heywood L. Edwards</i> , <i>Leutze</i> , <i>Newcomb</i> , ⁵ <i>Richard P. Leary</i>
	DesDiv 112	<i>Albert W. Grant</i> , <i>Bryant</i> , <i>Robinson</i> , <i>Ross</i>

⁵ Initial and/or long-term squadron flagship ¹ Later flagship

D

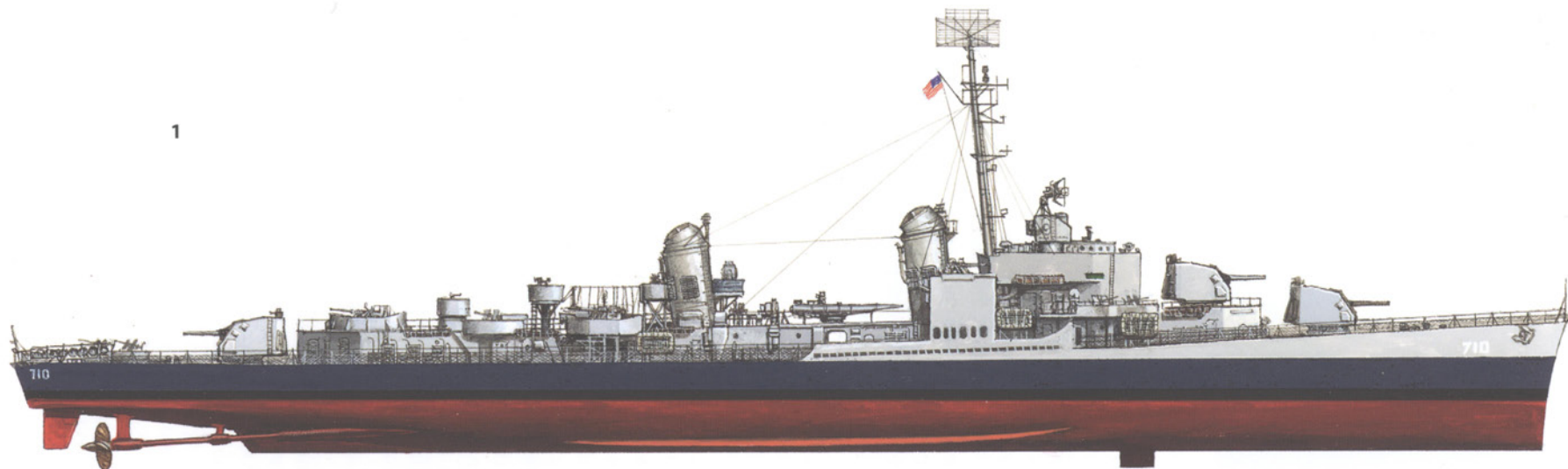
1) USS *GEARING* (DD 710), 1945

Lead ship of the long-hull class was *Gearing*, which completed at Federal's new facility at Port Newark, New Jersey and commissioned on May 3, 1945, but did not see action in World War II. Here she appears in camouflage Measure 22, with a 40mm quad mount replacing her after torpedo tubes.

2) USS *SOUTHERLAND* (DD 743), 1945

Southerland, Bath's second *Gearing*, became the first destroyer to enter Tokyo Bay on August 28, 1945 when she led a column through the Uraga Strait to occupy the Yokosuka Naval Base. Here she appears after her conversion as a radar picket destroyer in camouflage Measure 21. *Southerland* and Bath-built sister *Frank Knox* retained their after torpedo tube mounts throughout the war.

1



2





With Mitscher's fast carriers, *Knapp* and battleship *Alabama* screen *Lexington* in 1944. (NARA 80-G-234777)

New Guinea

In parallel with the Fifth Fleet's great push, General MacArthur moved west from Manus using his Seventh Fleet to leapfrog along New Guinea's north coast (and thereby sentencing Squadrons 21, 24, and 48 to a long hot summer on the Equator). On April 22 his Army forces landed at Hollandia and Aitape supported by Admiral Mitscher, who filled another gap in his schedule with four days of strikes beginning on the 21st – also hitting Palau, Yap, and Wolaie on the way out and Truk, Ponape, and Satawan on the way home.

In May, MacArthur jumped again: 125 miles to Wakde; then 180 miles to Biak, which finally provoked a response by sea. On the night of June 8–9, Seventh Fleet cruisers and destroyers intercepted five enemy destroyers towing barges toward Biak in a Tokyo Express-type relief attempt. In a three-hour pursuit by DesDivs 42, 47, and 48, *Fletcher*, *Jenkins*, *Radford*, and *La Vallette* worked up to 35 knots, exchanged fire, scored one hit, and had closed to 10,000 yards before executing orders to break off.

Central Pacific conclusion

Japanese resistance at Biak collapsed in late June. Next, General MacArthur seized Noemfoor Island 90 miles west on July 2, then jumped 200 miles further to Cape Sansapor on the Vogelkop Peninsula on July 30, followed by a final leap to Morotai in the Molucca (Maluku) Islands on September 15.

That same day, the 1st Marine Division landed at Peleliu in the Palau Islands. There, for the first time, the Japanese elected not to defend the beaches in favor of a “defense in depth” strategy, in which they waited until American troops were ashore and then bitterly contested every inch of ground. While bloody fighting continued until November, Admiral Spruance occupied the anchorage at Ulithi on September 23, completing his approach to the Philippines. In a change of command, his Fifth Fleet became Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet.

The Atlantic

Not all Fletcher and Sumner operations took place in the Pacific. In the fall of 1943, *Capps* operated with the British Home Fleet from its base at Scapa Flow, screening the American carrier *Ranger* in an air strike on Bodo, Norway, followed by a mission south to Gibraltar and another one north to the Barents Sea, before joining DesRon 51 in the Pacific. After shakedown, *Twiggs* also operated from Norfolk as a training ship until May 1944.

That same month, the first Sumners of Destroyer Division 119 crossed the Atlantic for Operation *Neptune*, the Normandy invasion. Clearing Plymouth, England on June 3, they provided two weeks of gunfire support for troops



ashore beginning on D-Day, June 6. The next day, while patrolling offshore, *Meredith* was struck by a glider bomb. She was towed clear but broke in two and sank on the 9th after near misses from German bombers opened up her seams.

On June 25, during the bombardment of Cherbourg, her DesDiv 119 sisters covered inshore minesweeping operations where their gunfire was so effective that they drew shore battery fire away from battleship *Texas*. O'Brien was damaged; ricochets also hit *Barton* and *Laffey*. The division returned to Boston for repairs and then joined Division 120 in the Pacific in the fall.

Allen M. Sumner, as completed with the enclosed "British-style" pilot house, runs trials on March 26, 1944. The Sumner class was the first to incorporate a built-in C.I.C., use of which was institutionalized across the Navy in 1944. (NARA 80-G-237593)

Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer squadron formed in early 1944

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 60	DesDiv 119	<i>Barton</i> , ⁵ <i>Laffey</i> , <i>Meredith</i> , O'Brien, <i>Walke</i>
	DesDiv 120	<i>Allen M. Sumner</i> , ^D <i>Cooper</i> , <i>Ingraham</i> , <i>Moale</i>

⁵ Squadron flagship ^D Division flagship

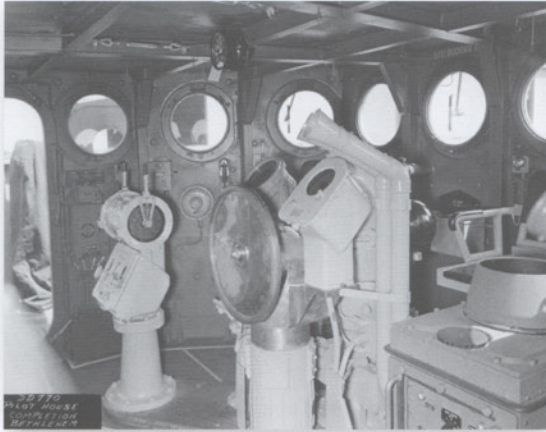
The Philippines

In the Pacific, the stage was now set for General MacArthur's return to the Philippines. He chose the island of Leyte, which could easily be approached from the east and afforded good access to the west toward his next objective, Luzon.

Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer squadrons formed in late 1944 and 1945

Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 61	DesDiv 121	<i>Collett</i> , <i>De Haven</i> , ⁵ <i>Lyman K. Swenson</i> , <i>Maddox</i> , <i>Mansfield</i>
	DesDiv 122	<i>Blue</i> , <i>Brush</i> , <i>Samuel N. Moore</i> , <i>Taussig</i>
DesRon 62	DesDiv 123	<i>Ault</i> , <i>Charles S. Sperry</i> , <i>English</i> , ⁵ <i>Haynsworth</i> , <i>Waldron</i>
	DesDiv 124	<i>Borie</i> , <i>Hank</i> , <i>John W. Weeks</i> , <i>Wallace L. Lind</i>
DesRon 63	DesDiv 125	<i>Compton</i> , ⁵ <i>Gainard</i> , <i>Harlan R. Dickson</i> , <i>Hugh Purvis</i> , <i>Soley</i>
	DesDiv 126	<i>Drexler</i> , <i>Hyman</i> , ^D <i>Mannert L. Abele</i> , <i>Purdy</i>
DesDon 64	DesDiv 127	<i>Alfred E. Cunningham</i> , ⁵ <i>Frank E. Evans</i> , <i>Harry E. Hubbard</i> , <i>John A. Bole</i> , <i>John R. Pierce</i>
	DesDiv 128	<i>Buck</i> , <i>Henley</i> , <i>John W. Thomason</i> , <i>Lofberg</i>
DesRon 66	DesDiv 131	<i>Hugh W. Hadley</i> , <i>James C. Owens</i> , <i>Putnam</i> , ⁵ <i>Strong</i> , <i>Willard Keith</i>
	DesDiv 132	<i>Douglas H. Fox</i> , <i>Massey</i> , ^D <i>Stormes</i> , <i>Zellars</i>

⁵ Squadron flagship ^D Division flagship



Helm of *Lowry*, a late Sumner completed with the revised pilot house design. (NARA)

The "square" bridge of late Fletcher-class destroyer *Halligan*, arranged so that officers did not have to duck through the pilot house to observe aircraft on any bearing. (NARA 80-G-264040)



Leyte

The vast majority of 2,100-tonners participated in the Leyte operation. With Admiral Kinkaid's 650-ship Seventh Fleet were destroyers from Squadrons 21–25, 47–49, 54, and 56. With Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet were 17 carriers in four task groups screened by DesRons 46, 50, 52, 53, and 55; DesRon 51 operated with oilers and escort carriers in an At Sea Logistics Group. Of all the 2,100-tonner squadrons formed by that time, only DesRons 45 and 57 were absent.

First to be damaged was DesRon 56's *Ross*, which struck two mines during mine clearance operations on October 19. In an exhibition of exceptional toughness, she was towed clear and later entered dry dock.

On the 20th, the landings proceeded without incident. In response, Japanese surface forces sortied. While a weak Northern Force of aircraft carriers with few aircraft approached from the northeast, hoping to lure Admiral Halsey away from protecting the beachhead, a powerful Center Force steamed toward San Bernardino Strait between the islands of Luzon and Samar and two elements of a weaker Southern Force also stood toward Leyte Gulf from the west via Surigao Strait.

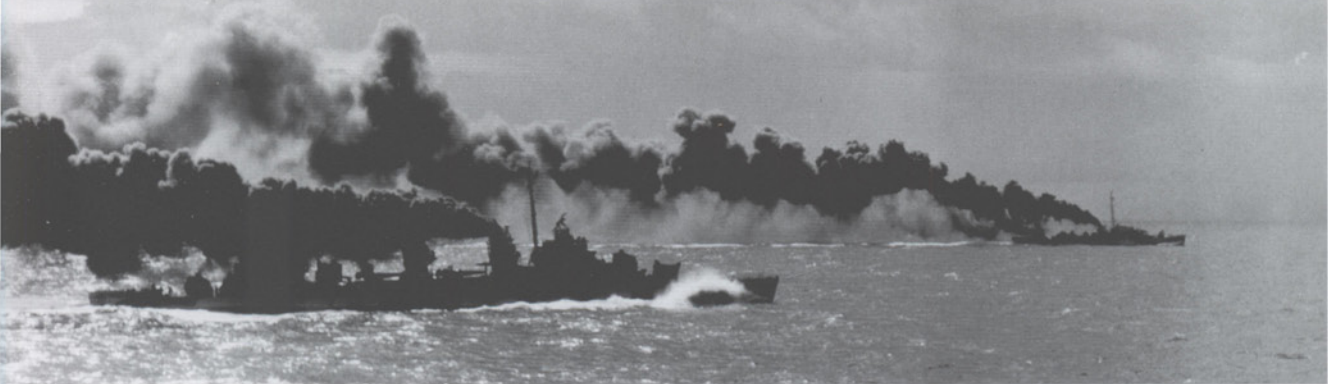
Opening the action on October 24, carrier *Princeton* was hit by a single bomb, which caused devastating explosions. DesRon 55's *Cassin Young*, *Irwin*, and *Morrison* came alongside to help fight fires and take off crew members – *Morrison* briefly became wedged between the carrier's stacks – and then were relieved by cruiser *Birmingham*, whose crew on deck was decimated when the carrier blew up. The destroyers rescued more than 1,000 carriermen.

Meanwhile, Halsey's fast carriers under Admiral Mitscher attacked the approaching Center Force in the Sibuyan Sea, sinking battleship *Musashi*. Satisfied that the Center Force was retiring, he then turned to confront the Northern Force at the end of the day.

The Battle of Surigao Strait

After midnight, now October 25, the Southern Force of two battleships, one cruiser, and four destroyers – followed at a distance by three more cruisers and four more destroyers – entered Surigao Strait from the south. Waiting in ambush were six battleships, eight cruisers, and 26 destroyers of Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet.

As the enemy closed, destroyers from three squadrons executed consecutive torpedo attacks. First, DesRon 54's *Remey*, *McGowan*, and *Melvin* attacked from the east and *McDermut* and *Monssen* from the west; then laid smoke and retired. Next, DesRon 24's *Hutchins*, *Daly*, and *Bache* followed by HMAS *Arunta*, *Beale*, and *Killen* attacked from the west; then opened gunfire. Finally, as the Battle Line commenced gunfire overhead, Squadron 56 (with *Halford* replacing *Ross*) pressed its attack in three sections to ensure the enemy would pass "through torpedo waters, no matter which way he turns." Overall result:



both Japanese battleships and three destroyers were sunk while three cruisers were damaged, at a cost of damage only to DesRon 56's *Albert W. Grant*.

The Battle off Samar

The following morning, a frantic call for help came from Rear Admiral Clifton A. Sprague's Taffy 3, one of three formations of escort carriers screened by the nine destroyers of Squadron 47 and destroyer escorts – no match at all for the four battleships, five cruisers, and eleven destroyers of the Japanese Center Force, which had reversed course, passed through San Bernardino Strait, and was now bearing down on them.

As Taffy 3's aircraft rose in defense, *Johnston* turned to lay a smokescreen and launch torpedoes. One of these nearly severed heavy cruiser *Kumano*'s bow before *Johnston* was hit by battleship *Kongo*. *Hoel* launched five torpedoes at *Kongo* and five at cruiser *Haguro* before enemy shells put her out of action. *Heermann* also attacked battleship *Haruna* with torpedoes and then tried to hold off heavy cruisers with gunfire as they closed the slow-steaming escort carriers.

Nearly an hour into the battle, Japanese flagship *Yamato* spotted torpedo tracks and turned away. This further broke up the Japanese formation – too late for escort carrier *Gambier Bay*, destroyer escort *Samuel B. Roberts*, and *Hoel*, which were sunk by shellfire. *Johnston*, too, went down, but not before the crew of a Japanese destroyer rendered honors as their ship passed close aboard. Posthumously, her Commander Ernest E. Evans was awarded the Medal of Honor for "... outshooting and outmaneuvering the enemy as he consistently interposed his vessel between the hostile fleet units and our carriers ..."

Two hours into their pursuit but with mounting losses and their formation in disarray, the Japanese broke off and turned back for San Bernardino Strait, leaving Taffy 3 stunned but victorious. Regrettably, survivors of the lost ships remained unrescued for three days, during which injuries, the elements, and sharks took their toll. Only 58 from *Hoel* and 145 from *Johnston* were eventually picked up, but their heroic fight resonated throughout the Navy and stands as one of the outstanding surface actions of all time.

Heermann (foreground) and one of Taffy 3's John C. Butler-class destroyer escorts lay smoke screens early in the battle off Samar, October 25, 1944. (NARA 80-G-288885)

BELOW TOP

Flagship of Taffy 3's destroyer screen, *Hoel* fired torpedoes and saw two enemy columns turn away before being boxed in and sunk by more than forty heavy-caliber hits. Here she appears as commissioned in the summer of 1943. (NH 97895)

BELOW BOTTOM

The first destroyer to engage the enemy and last to sink at Samar was "GQ Johnny." *Johnston* appears here off Tacoma, Washington in a delivery photo taken October 27, 1943. (NH 63495)





Hull down in a storm: an unidentified Fletcher nearly disappears in the trough of a wave. *Spence* was lost under far worse conditions during the great typhoon of December 1944. (NH 89375)

The Battle off Cape Engaño

Far to the north, meanwhile, Admiral Mitscher had closed the Northern Force and commenced launching air strikes an hour before Admiral Halsey received the first appeal to assist Taffy 3. Embarked with his Battle Line – screened by DesRon 52 – Halsey raced south but arrived off San

Bernardino Strait too late to intercept the retreating Center Force. *Owen* and *Miller* finished off destroyer *Nowaki*, the lone straggler.

Mitscher's task force, meanwhile, continued its air strikes against the Northern Force and ended the day by sending four cruisers and ten DesRon 50 and 55 destroyers to mop up.

Leyte conclusion

The end of one type of battle saw the beginning of another. Before noon that same October 25, a Japanese plane crashed and sank another Taffy 3 escort carrier, *St. Lo*. Then on November 1 in quick succession, *Claxton* was damaged by a plane that crashed close aboard, *Killen* was bombed, *Ammen* was deliberately crashed, and *Abner Read* was sunk by suiciders. Two more 2,100-tonners were hit at the end of the month: *Ross* in her dry dock on the 28th and *Aulick* the next day. It was apparent that a severe new threat was at hand in the form of the Kamikaze Special Attack Force.

Ashore, Japanese ground forces began receiving Tokyo Express-style reinforcements via Ormoc Bay, Leyte's west coast "back door." Beginning on November 27, DesRon 22 destroyers made three runs through Surigao Strait to intercept. Newly-arrived DesDiv 120 drew the assignment on December 2–3 and sank one enemy destroyer but lost 2,200-tonner *Cooper* to a torpedo from another. Finally, on the 7th, DesDivs 41 and 119 supported amphibious landings that eventually cut off the reinforcements.

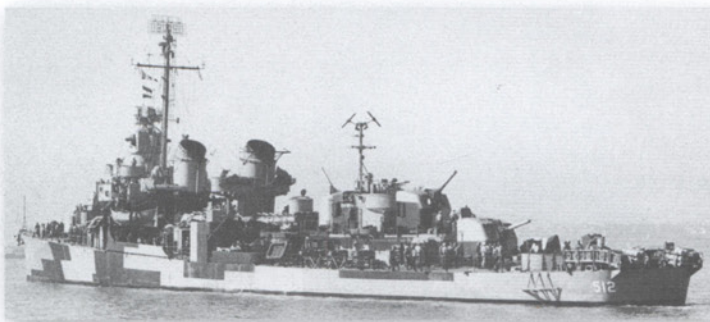
By then, General MacArthur was moving toward Luzon's Lingayen Gulf for his planned ground advance on Manila. En route, beginning on December 12, *Howorth*, *Haraden*, *Bryant*, and *Pringle* all sustained kamikaze hits. Concurrently, Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet resumed air strikes from positions east of Luzon. There, on December 17, it was caught by a typhoon in which *Spence* and 1,500-tonners *Hull* and *Monaghan* were lost, and *Hickox* nearly so.

Luzon

The Lingayen Gulf landings on January 9, 1945 followed the same general plan as previous operations, but the number and severity of air attacks increased.

Suicide planes, boats, and swimmers were effective, sinking 24 ships and damaging 67. On January 6, kamikazes attacked the Bombardment and Fire Support Groups screened by DesRons 56 and 60. No Fletchers were hit, but *Allen M. Sumner*, *O'Brien*, and *Walke* were all damaged (*Walke's* Commander George F. Davis was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for continuing to conn his ship while mortally burned).

"She always did more than her share," said Capt. Arleigh Burke of *Spence*, the only 2,100-tonner lost in the great typhoon of December 1944. Here she stands off Hunters Point, California two months earlier, before her last deployment. (NARA 19-N-80398)



With the capture of Lingayen came a fine base at Subic Bay, two hours' steaming north of Manila Bay, which was defended by Corregidor and smaller fortified islands. For four days beginning February 14, destroyers from Squadrons 21 and 23 closed Corregidor's cliffs to point-blank range so they could locate and silence guns hidden in caves. *Fletcher* and *Hopewell* were hit (*Fletcher* Water Tender Elmer Charles Bigelow posthumously received the Medal of Honor for sacrificing himself in fighting fires) that first day while *La Vallette* and *Radford* were also mined inside nearby Mariveles Harbor on the Bataan Peninsula.

Southern Philippines and Borneo

After the Lingayen operation concluded on January 17, the Seventh Fleet turned south to continue the liberation of the Philippines in an extended series of amphibious landings – at Palawan on February 28, at Zamboanga on Mindanao's western tip on March 10, at Panay on the 18th, Cebu on the 26th, southern Mindanao on April 17, and finally at Borneo's Tarakan Island, Brunei Bay, and Balikpapan on May 1, June 10, and July 1 respectively. Led by remnants of Squadrons 21–23 plus *Hart*, *Metcalf*, and *Shields* from DesDiv 116, each landing began with mine clearance and UDT operations. At Tarakan, Division 42's last active ship was put out of the war – *Jenkins*, which struck a mine and came to rest with her bow on the bottom.

Iwo Jima and Okinawa

On January 26, Admirals Spruance and Mitscher relieved Admirals Halsey and McCain and the Third Fleet again became the Fifth Fleet. Before them lay the approaches to Japan. Iwo Jima in the Bonin Islands was valuable because the Japanese had constructed two airfields there and were working on a third. In Japanese hands, these posed a threat to Saipan; in American hands, they could provide an emergency landing strip for B-29 bombers returning to Saipan from Japan and a base for P-51 fighter cover. Okinawa in the Ryukyu Islands, within range of airfields on the southernmost Japanese island of Kyushu, was important as a staging base for the prospective invasion of Japan.



TOP
On Valentine's Day 1945, *Hopewell* received two hits from guns on Corregidor. Here in Manila Bay's North Channel with the Bataan Peninsula in the background, she is still smoking less than three minutes after a hit on her forward stack. (NARA 80-G-305448)

BELOW
The Sullivans was named for five brothers lost when cruiser *Juneau* was torpedoed after the battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. Here she screens *Bunker Hill*, which has just been hit by two suicide planes within 30 seconds on May 11, 1945. *The Sullivans* later picked up 166 members of the carrier's crew when fire forced them overboard. (NARA 80-G-274264)

Fletcher-class destroyer squadrons formed in late 1944 and 1945		
Squadron	Division	Ships
DesRon 57 ¹	DesDiv 113	Rowe, ⁵ Smalley, Stoddard, Watts, Wren
	DesDiv 114	Bearss, ⁰ Jarvis, John Hood, Porter
DesRon 58 ²	DesDiv 115	Colhoun, Gregory, Little, Rooks, Van Valkenburgh ⁵
	DesDiv 116	Hart, Metcalf, Shields, Wiley

⁵ Squadron flagship ⁰ Division flagship ¹ Initially deployed to the Aleutian Islands ² Never fully formed



Unsung destroyer tenders were a vital part of the logistics chain. Here, six Sumners of DesRons 62 and 63 nest alongside *Dixie* in 1945: *Compton*, *Ault*, *Charles S. Sperry*, *English*, *John W. Weeks*, and *Borie*. (NARA 80-G-90541)

Iwo Jima

Operation *Detachment*, the seizure of Iwo Jima, was scheduled first because it was expected to be easier. When Admiral Turner's Marines made the assault on February 19, however, they discovered that the Japanese had dug in more deeply than the preliminary bombardment could reach. It took a month of intense fighting to secure the island, during which shore batteries hit *Leutze*, *Colhoun*, and *Terry*, putting the latter out of action until the end of the war. Kamikaze attacks were not a factor.

Okinawa

Operation *Iceberg*, the invasion of Okinawa, was next. Preliminaries began on March 14, when Admiral Mitscher sortied from Ulithi to attack the Kyushu airfields. With him were 17 carriers, screened by 67 Fletchers and Sumners from DesRons 25, 47, 48, 52–54, 61, and 62.

On March 19, carrier *Franklin* was hit by two bombs. Her 832 dead and more than 1000 total casualties might have been even worse had not DesRon 52's *Miller* and *Hickox* taken off personnel and helped fight fires from close aboard. The following day, *Halsey Powell* was alongside carrier *Hancock* when a suicide plane overshot the carrier and crashed into her stern, sending her home for repairs.

E

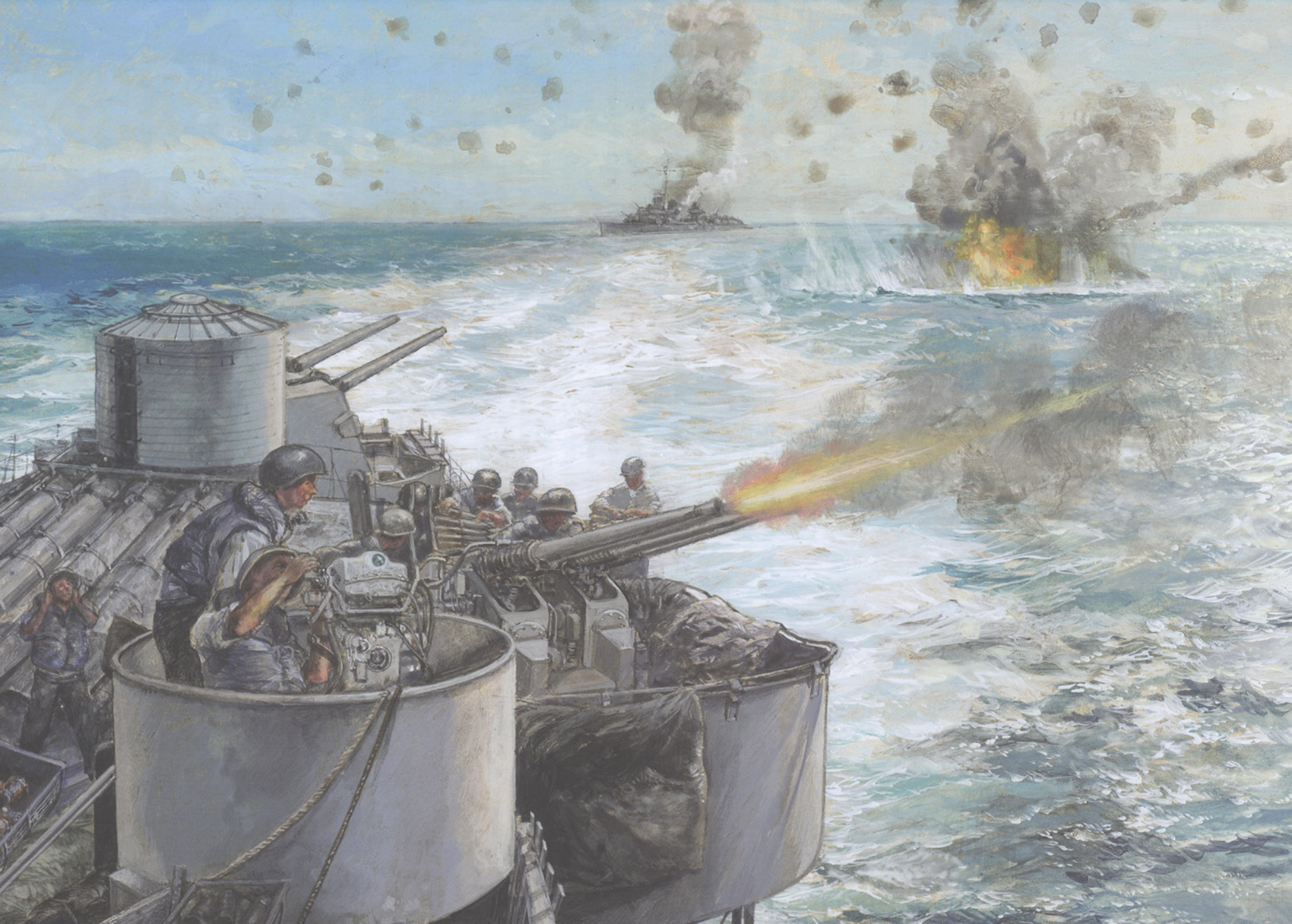
HUGH W. HADLEY AND EVANS VS. KAMIKAZES

On the morning of May 11, 1945, Allen M. Sumner-class *Hugh W. Hadley* and Fletcher-class *Evans* were operating together on radar picket station No. 15 northwest of Okinawa when 156 enemy planes appeared on *Hadley's* radar. Opening the battle, the Corsairs of their combat air patrol not only splashed about 50 of these but continued the fight after running out of ammunition, trying to force down more.

For more than 90 minutes, however, *Evans* and *Hadley* became direct targets. Maneuvering at high speed for best gunnery advantage, the two ships racked up a record number of kamikaze kills. At times, they supported each other; always, they avoided firing on the CAP, which gradually closed to protect them as the battle wore on. *Hadley* expended 801 rounds of 5-inch, 8,950 rounds of 40mm, and 5,990 rounds of 20mm in the approximately 100-minute battle. The "Fightin' Bob" recorded similar numbers.

Evans was credited with 19 kamikaze kills, including four which put her out of action by flooding her engineering spaces. She lost 32 killed and 27 wounded. Continuing a few minutes more, *Hadley* suffered three kamikaze hits. She was put out of action by a strike at the starboard waterline accompanied by an underwater bomb or torpedo explosion that hogged her keel by nearly five feet and severed both propeller shafts – these slid aft, jamming her rudders. *Hadley* was credited with 23 kills (including the 3 strikes) and lost 28 killed and 67 wounded.

After the battle, both ships struggled to stay afloat until they could be towed to the Kerama Retto anchorage. Both received the Presidential Unit Citation for their performance; neither was repaired following the war.





ABOVE

Class leader of the minelayers, *Robert H. Smith*, with her mines visible amidships on tracks that lead over her stern.
(NARA 80-G-237956)

ABOVE RIGHT

"So good that we cannot spare them," said Admiral Turner of *Heywood L. Edwards* and *Richard P. Leary*, both of which were repeatedly commended for their accurate and devastating fire through six Pacific operations. *Leary*, shown here, became DesRon 56 flagship in April 1945 after *Newcomb* was disabled.
(NARA 80-G-237956)



Robert H. Smith-class destroyer-minelayer squadron formed in 1945

Squadron	Division	Ships
MinRon 3	MinDiv 7	<i>Harry F. Bauer, Robert H. Smith, Shannon, Thomas E. Fraser</i>
	MinDiv 8	<i>Adams, Henry A. Wiley, Shea, Tolman</i>
	MinDiv 9	<i>Aaron Ward, Gwin,⁵ J. William Ditter, Lindsey</i>

⁵ Squadron flagship

Next, Vice Admiral Turner stood out for Okinawa with more than 1,200 ships in his Expeditionary Force – among them ninety-six 2,100- and 2,200-tonners from DesRons 24, 45, 46, 49–51, 55–58, 60, and 66 and the 12 converted Sumners of Mine Squadron 3.

A first step on March 26 was the seizure of the Kerama Retto (Kerama Islands) 20 miles west of Okinawa as a forward anchorage. MinRon 3 led 75 sweepers in clearing 3,000 square miles of ocean. Except for *Halligan*, which was mined on March 26, subsequent mine losses were negligible. That same day, however, *Kimberly* was damaged by kamikazes as was *O'Brien* the next day – her second kamikaze strike of the war.

On April 1, 23 destroyers provided fire support as the first of nearly 200,000 United States troops landed at Hagushi on the island's west side. As at Peleliu and Iwo Jima, the Japanese did not contest the beaches but defended in depth inland to inflict maximum losses. Over the next 82 days, they sustained an estimated 250,000 army and civilian casualties.

Offshore, Admiral Turner reassigned DesRon 63's Commodore Frederick Moosbrugger to take charge of the destroyers as ComTaskFlotilla 5. To prepare for sustained air attack, Moosbrugger deployed them in three lines of defense. As his front line, he established eight (later nine) radar picket stations 40 to 70 miles distant from the transport area. These he backed up by outer and inner anti-air, anti-small boat, and anti-submarine screens within 25 miles of the beachhead to protect the anchorage and ship movements between Okinawa and Kerama Retto.

The distant radar pickets were key: the Okinawa defense depended on their rapid reporting of incoming attacks and fighter direction. Initially, each consisted of one Fletcher or Sumner, with a team of two fighter directors plus radar- and radiomen embarked, to report enemy plane contacts and vector

Newcomb shortly after being struck off the small island of Ie Shima during the first mass kamikaze attack at Okinawa, April 6, 1945. Here, minus her after stack, she staggers out from under a pillar of smoke.
(NARA 80-G-322419)



out combat air patrols (CAP) to intercept. In defense, each picket station was assigned its own CAP of four to six planes, with which it communicated on a separate frequency. It also had two landing-craft support vessels, which were stationed one-third of the distance to the neighboring radar picket stations to increase the probability of detecting low-flying planes or other surface threats. For the destroyers, close-in self-defense meant maneuvering at 25 knots or more and presenting one's broadside to an attacking plane to provide both the greatest concentration of gunfire and the shallowest possible target.



Thanks to Admiral Mitscher's strikes on Kyushu in March, all was quiet until April 6. That day, however, accompanying the suicide sortie of the battleship *Yamato*, the first mass attack came in – a *kikusui* (“floating chrysanthemum”) of 376 kamikaze suicide planes and 341 other planes, which hit 18 ships including 12 destroyers. *Bush* and *Colhoun* were sunk; DesRon 56 flagship *Newcomb* and sister *Leutze* were hit so hard that they were repaired only sufficiently to get them home; *Mullany*, abandoned and then reboarded, made Kerama Retto under her own power. *Haynsworth*, *Hyman*, and *Howorth* also sustained casualties. In response, on April 10, Captain Moosbrugger increased the number of pickets on each station to two destroyers and pulled in the support craft, now grimly known as “pall bearers,” to operate within 3,000 yards.

A new horror appeared on April 12: the *Okha*, a short-range, rocket-powered missile with plywood wings carrying 2,600 lb of explosives, dropped by a mother plane, and guided to its target at 500 miles per hour by a human pilot. One hit *Mannert L. Abele* amid the chaos following a conventional kamikaze hit, sinking her in three minutes. Others struck *Purdy* and *Cassin Young* and glanced off *Stanly* that same day.

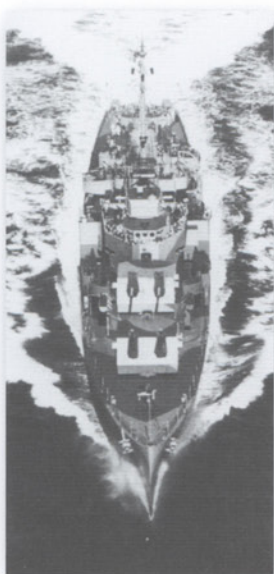
In addition to single and small group attacks that could appear at any time around the clock, nine more *kikusuis* followed. Some engagements lasted more than an hour. Casualties of more than 20 percent were sustained by *Kidd* on April 11; *Lindsey* and *Zellars* on the 12th; *Sigsbee* on the 14th; *Laffey*, *Bryant*, and *Pringle* on the 16th; *Isherwood* on the 22nd, and *Hazelwood* and *Haggard* on the 29th. DesRon 24 flagship *Hutchins* was blasted by a suicide boat on the 27th. Losses peaked again on May 3–4 when *Little*, *Morrison*, and *Luce* were sunk – the second two with more than 500 dead between them – and *Aaron Ward*, *Gwin*, *Shea* and *Ingraham* were badly damaged. The great fight of *Evans* and *Hugh W. Hadley* followed on the 11th (see Plate E) and *Bache* was mauled on the 13th.

In mid-May, US airstrips and radar stations became operational on Okinawa and soon land-based fighters were joining bombers over Japan. The number of active picket stations was reduced to five, with at least three destroyers assigned to each. Losses continued, however: *Longshaw* was sunk on the 18th with more than 50 percent casualties; *Thatcher* was critically damaged on the 20th; and on the 27th, the day that Halsey relieved Spruance and the Fifth Fleet became the Third Fleet again, *Braine* sustained 144 casualties. The next day *Drexler* lost 60 percent of her crew, with the dead outnumbering the wounded by three to

What damage a single kamikaze could do: *Leutze* was lying alongside *Newcomb* when one more plane approached. With *Newcomb*'s superstructure masking her guns, she could not defend herself. The plane caught *Newcomb*'s fantail and then slammed into *Leutze*, nearly severing her stern. Neither ship was repaired after returning home. (NH 69110)

On May 3, 1945, in her second major anti-kamikaze action, minelayer *Aaron Ward* was nearly razed and set afire by direct hits from five kamikazes and a glancing blow from a sixth. Towed to Kerama Retto after a night-long battle to remain afloat, as seen in this May 13 photo, she was made seaworthy and steamed home to New York under her own power but was not repaired following the war. She received the Presidential Unit Citation for this action. (NARA)





Her forward-bearing firepower is evident as 2,200-tonner *Purdy* runs trials off Cape Elizabeth, Maine on July 18, 1944. *Purdy* received a Navy Unit Commendation for action on April 12, 1945 when, in a 90-minute battle, she was struck only by the last of about 30 attacking planes. (NARA 80-G-235680)

one. On June 6, the day after another typhoon passed by, *J. William Ditter* was damaged beyond repair while on the 10th, *William D. Porter* succumbed to a near miss that opened up her seams. On the 16th, *Twiggs* was lost with 214 casualties. The Army declared Okinawa secure on June 21 but the pickets' finale came only on July 29, when *Prichett* was hit and *Callaghan* sunk, and on the 30th, when *Cassin Young* was hit for the second time.

Outstanding performances were everywhere. *Bennion* excelled in fighter direction; *Wadsworth* survived 22 attacks during 36 consecutive days on station; *Barton* set an endurance record of 87 continuous days without damage. But 77 *Fletchers* and *Sumners* were hit: 63 of those that had deployed with *Turner*; 17 with *Mitscher*. Thirteen of the former were sunk; the others limped or were towed to the Kerama Retto anchorage, where still they were not safe: there was always a fear that suicide swimmers might board and overwhelm unarmed crews repairing hulks "in cold iron" during the weeks it took to make them seaworthy. Yet none were scrapped or abandoned: all 64 made it home – under their own power or towed – where only nine were judged unworthy of repair.

Of the more than 58,000 men at sea in these 175 ships, nearly 2,200 were killed and 2,600 wounded – an overall casualty rate of about 8 percent but about 20 percent for those hit. Seven *Fletchers* and *Sumners* lost more than 50 percent of their crews. Five sustained more than 150 casualties with more than 100 killed – 60 to 80 percent of total casualties in each case: *Halligan*, which drifted aground under enemy guns; *Morrison* and *Drexler*, which sank so quickly that men below decks could not get out; *Luce*, which had a power failure; and *Twiggs*, which was torpedoed in a magazine and then was crashed. *Pringle* and *Longshaw* also sustained more than 150 total casualties. Twelve other ships suffered more killed than wounded; *Braine* and *Hazelwood* recorded the highest casualties of those not sunk.

For every survivor, such statistics mirrored sights of scores of aircraft swarming overhead; of the fearless Corsair pilots of the CAP; of enemy planes bursting into gigantic fireballs or, conversely, closing untouched, in seeming slow motion, to point-blank range; of hearing impaired for life by the shattering sound of 5-inch fire; of whole sections of a ship demolished in an instant, leaving only mangled and scorched survivors, if any; of damage-control parties working frantically to stem flooding; of a pharmacist's mate performing triage; of piled-up body parts and blood running down the decks; and of unanswered calls to muster – all condensed to terse citations that characterized their performances as having been "in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Few at home ever learned what the destroyermen endured at Okinawa. At the time, other events obscured their exploits: President Roosevelt's death;

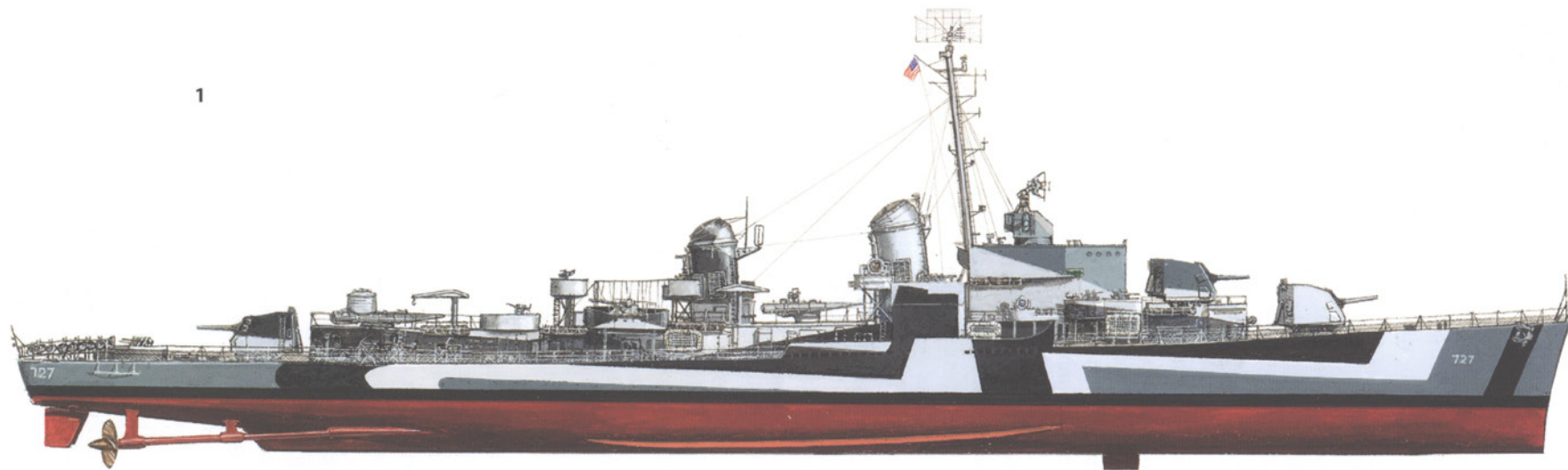
F 1) USS DE HAVEN (DD 727), 1944

De Haven, flagship of Destroyer Squadron 61, is shown in camouflage Measure 32/3D, which she shared with Sumner-class sisters *Ingraham*, *Cooper*, *English*, *Walke*, *Laffey*, *O'Brien*, *Meredith*, *Mansfield*, *Hyman*, *Shannon*, *Adams*, *Brush*, and *J. William Ditter*. An excellent model of *De Haven* by Gibbs & Cox is in the possession of the Maine Maritime Museum at Bath, where *De Haven* was built.

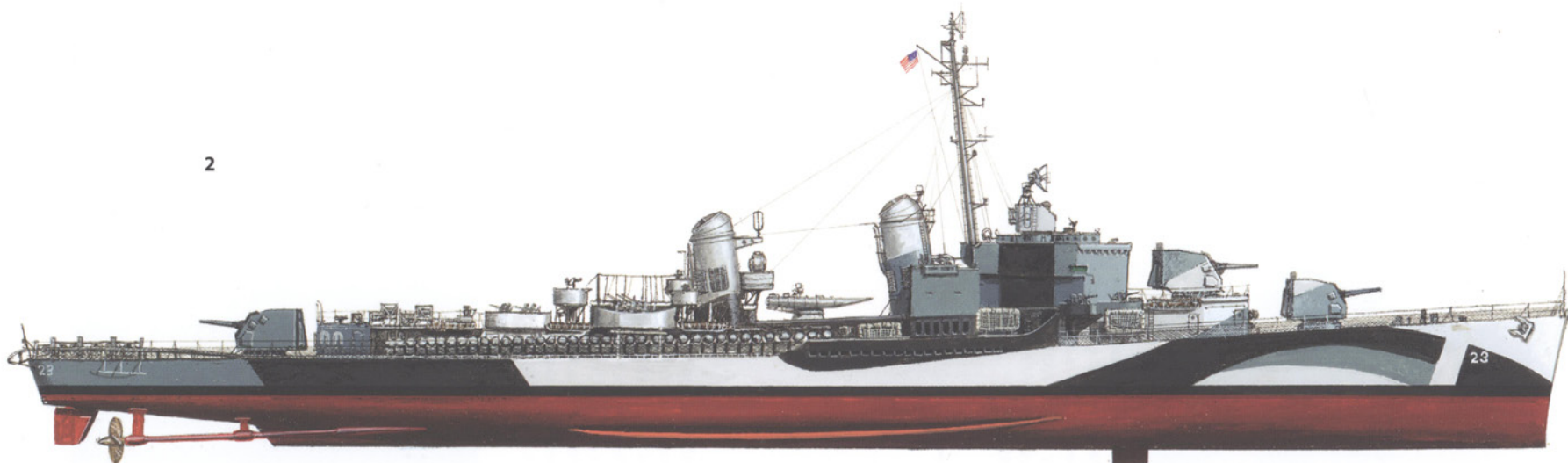
2) USS ROBERT H. SMITH (DM 23), 1945

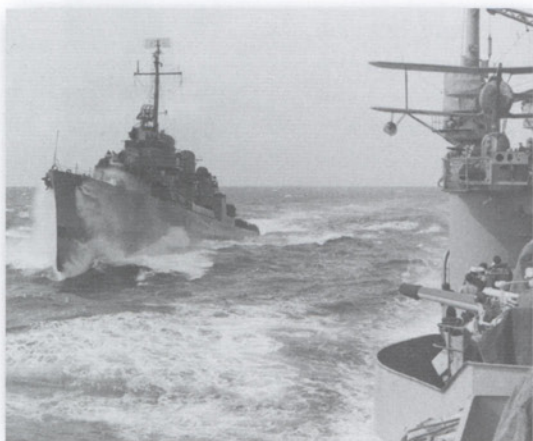
Lead ship of a class of twelve 2,200-ton destroyers converted as high-speed minelayers, *Robert H. Smith* appears here in Measure 32/25D. As Mine Squadron 3, the 12 went to Okinawa, where eight were decorated. *Smith* received the Navy Unit Commendation for her outstanding record in mine clearance operations and as a fighter direction ship, March–June 1945.

1



2





In a heavy weather scene familiar to any destroyerman, *Isherwood* comes alongside heavy cruiser *Tuscaloosa* in August 1943. (NARA 80-G-79429)

“Never ... have naval forces done so much with so little against such odds for so long a period,” added Captain Moosbrugger in his action report. And from afar, Prime Minister Churchill registered his overall verdict in a postwar message to President Truman: “The strength of willpower, devotion and technical resources applied by the United States to this task, joined with the death struggle of the enemy ... places this battle among the most intense and famous of military history.”

Japan

On July 1, Admiral Halsey’s Third Fleet – now incorporating elements of the Seventh Fleet and the Royal Navy plus the first Gearing-class radar pickets – commenced launching air strikes to soften up Japan for invasion. On July 18–19, DesRon 62 with Cruiser Division 18 swept Sagami Wan outside Tokyo Bay. On July 22–23, in rough weather following the passage of a typhoon, DesRon 61 attacked a convoy in the same area. On July 29–30, DesRon 48, *Southerland* and three British destroyers screened a battleship and cruiser formation in shelling factories in southern Honshu; and on 30–31, DesRon 25 brazenly penetrated all the way to the head of Suruga Wan near Mt. Fuji to deliver another shelling. Then, on August 6, a B-29 from Tinian dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. On the 9th, the day a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, *Borie* became the last destroyer hit by suicide aircraft.

There was rejoicing on August 15 when the news of the ceasefire arrived but it took nearly two weeks to organize minesweeping operations and occupation events. Finally, on August 27, the Third Fleet, with the 2,100- and 2,200-tonners of Squadrons 21, 25, 48, 50, 53, 57, 60, 61, and 62 and long-hulls *Benner*, *Chevalier*, *Duncan*, *Frank Knox*, *Hawkins*, *Higbee*, *Myles C. Fox*, *Perkins*, *Rogers*, and *Southerland* attached, closed the Honshu coast and anchored in Sagami Wan. From there, on the 28th, *Southerland* and DesDiv 106 led cruiser *San Diego* and auxiliaries into Tokyo Bay to secure the Yokosuka Naval Base and begin liberating prisoners of war. The fleet followed on the 29th, and on September 2 *Nicholas* and *Taylor* ferried Allied representatives and members of the press to the battleship *Missouri* out in Tokyo Bay for the formal surrender.



Chevalier was one of five Gearings to earn a campaign medal in World War II. Here she steams in the Atlantic on May 24, 1945, ready to transfer to the Pacific after her conversion as a radar picket. (NARA 19-N-38596)

Over the next months, destroyers from across the Pacific returned home. Some arrived in time to receive visitors on Navy Day, October 27; most returned by the end of the year. No homecoming was more celebrated than that of DesRon 23's *Charles Ausburne*, *Claxton*, *Dyson*, and *Converse*, which steamed up the Potomac River to the Washington Navy Yard on October 17. Two days later they received a group Presidential Unit Citation in a ceremony attended by Admirals Halsey and Mitscher and, of course, Captain "31-knot" Burke.



Under way for Tokyo Bay: *Twining* and *Wedderburn* stand out of Sagami Wan on August 28, 1945 for the occupation of the Yokosuka Naval Base. View looks west with Mt. Fuji in the background. (NARA 80-G-344505)

LOOKING BACK

The "destroyers that won the war" were among the most successful of their time and the most battle tested of all time – distinguished by the legacy of determination and fighting skill left by their officers and men. Nineteen *Fletchers* and four *Sumners* were lost; all but *Spence* to enemy action. The six more *Fletchers* and three *Sumners* not repaired after Okinawa brought the total casualties to 32 – one in seven *Fletchers* and one in ten *Sumners*.

Losses

Year	Campaign	Ships
1943	Solomons	<i>Brownson</i> , <i>Chevalier</i> , <i>De Haven</i> , <i>Strong</i>
1944	Normandy	<i>Meredith</i>
	Leyte	<i>Abner Read</i> , <i>Cooper</i> , <i>Hoel</i> , <i>Johnston</i> , <i>Spence</i>
1945	Okinawa	<i>Aaron Ward</i> , ¹ <i>Bush</i> , <i>Callaghan</i> , <i>Colhoun</i> , <i>Drexler</i> , <i>Evans</i> , ¹ <i>Haggard</i> , ¹ <i>Halligan</i> , <i>Hugh W. Hadley</i> , ¹ <i>Hutchins</i> , ¹ <i>J. William Ditter</i> , ¹ <i>Leutze</i> , ¹ <i>Little</i> , <i>Longshaw</i> , <i>Luce</i> , <i>Mannert L. Abele</i> , <i>Morrison</i> , <i>Newcomb</i> , ¹ <i>Pringle</i> , <i>Thatcher</i> , ¹ <i>Twiggs</i> , <i>William D. Porter</i>

¹ Damaged and not repaired

One hundred seventy-three *Fletchers*, 59 *Sumners*, and five *Gearings* earned campaign medals and more than 1,500 collective service stars. Ten were decorated for their record in the Solomons; four for Leyte; five more for carrier rescues; and 32 for other service late in the war up to and including Okinawa. Many others were cited for general excellence over an extended period.

Decorations

Award	Ships
Presidential Unit Citation	<i>Aaron Ward</i> , <i>Bennion</i> , <i>Charles Ausburne</i> , ¹ <i>Claxton</i> , ¹ <i>Converse</i> , ¹ <i>Cowell</i> , <i>Dyson</i> , ¹ <i>Evans</i> , <i>Harry F. Bauer</i> , <i>Heermann</i> , ² <i>Henry A. Wiley</i> , <i>Hoel</i> , ² <i>Hugh W. Hadley</i> , <i>Johnston</i> , ² <i>Laffey</i> , <i>Nicholas</i> , <i>O'Bannon</i> , <i>Radford</i> , <i>Spence</i> , ¹ <i>Stanly</i> , ¹ <i>Wadsworth</i>
Navy Unit Commendation	<i>Adams</i> , <i>Albert W. Grant</i> , <i>Ammen</i> , <i>Anthony</i> , <i>Barton</i> , <i>Bennett</i> , <i>Bradford</i> , <i>Brown</i> , <i>Bryant</i> , <i>Cassin Young</i> , <i>Gainard</i> , <i>Gwin</i> , <i>Heywood L. Edwards</i> , <i>Hickox</i> , <i>Hudson</i> , <i>Ingraham</i> , <i>Irwin</i> , <i>J. William Ditter</i> , <i>Lowry</i> , <i>Miller</i> , <i>Morrison</i> (2), <i>Newcomb</i> , <i>Prichett</i> , <i>Purdy</i> , <i>Robert H. Smith</i> , <i>Shea</i> , <i>Taylor</i> , <i>Van Valkenburgh</i> , <i>Wickes</i>

¹ DesRon 23 ² Taffy 3

After the war, the Fletchers not used for training were laid up, though many were returned to service for the Korean War. Thereafter, while the Gearing's were the newest and most prominent, ships of all three classes continued to operate with the US Navy into the 1970s and with other navies into the 21st century. Six have been preserved – by shipmates and others still passionate about a time when neither technology nor human skill and determination could defeat a well-prepared enemy, but together they won a war.

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G

FLAGSHIP TASK GROUP ENTERS TOKYO BAY

On August 27, 1945, the Allied Third Fleet closed the Japanese coast and anchored in Sagami Wan. Two days later, after the channel through the Uraga Suido (Uraga Strait) was cleared and the Yokosuka Naval Base secured, many of the ships present formed into a miles-long column and followed minesweepers north into Tokyo Bay.

Attached to Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr.'s Flagship Task Group were the three surviving destroyers of the original Division 41, *Nicholas*, *Taylor*, and *O'Bannon*, chosen to honor their long service, which had begun in the Solomon Islands shortly before he had taken command there nearly three years previously.

Here at 0840 hours on August 29, the three destroyers, weathered and low on stores after nearly two months at sea, lead his flagship *Missouri* and sister battleship *Iowa* into the turn at the Kannon Saki Lighthouse. A Japanese harbor pilot and interpreter are embarked in *Nicholas* but the ship's own navigator calls the course changes through the minefield. In 40 minutes the formation will have dispersed as the ships proceed independently to anchor in pre-assigned berths in the lower reaches of Tokyo Bay.

The formal surrender ceremony on board *Missouri* followed on September 2.



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APPENDICES

DIMENSIONS AND DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS

Class	Fletcher	Allen M. Sumner	Gearing
Length (overall)*	376' 3 ⁵ / ₁₆ "	375' 11 ¹³ / ₁₆ "	390' 2 ³ / ₄ "
Length (waterline)*	368' 11 ³ / ₄ "	368' 5 ¹¹ / ₁₆ "	383'
Beam*	39' 7 ³ / ₄ "	41' 1 ⁵ / ₈ "	41' 1 ³ / ₈ "
Maximum Draft	15' 0"	15' 8"	18' 6"
Freeboard at bow*	19' 11 ³ / ₈ "	20' 11 ¹ / ₈ "	19' 2 ⁵ / ₈ "
Displacement: standard (long tons)*	2,100	2,200	2,425
Displacement to design waterline (long tons)*	2,544	2,670	2,952
Fuel (long tons) (95% full)*	492	497	720
Boilers	4		
Steam conditions (war)	565 psi; 850°F		
Design Shaft Horsepower	60,000		
Screws/Blades/Diameter	2/3/12' 3"	2/4/12'	
Rudders	1	2	
Design Speed	37.8 knots	36.5 knots	34.5 knots
Cruising Range (war)	4,800nm @ 15 knots		5,800nm @ 15 knots
Tactical diameter	950 yards @ 30 knots	700 yards @ 30 knots	725 yards @ 30 knots
Crew	20 officers; 309 enlisted		20 officers; 325 enlisted

* Source: survey data published by the Bureau of Construction and Repair in the General Information Books for USS *La Vallette* (DD 448), Fletcher class; USS *De Haven* (DD 727), Allen M. Sumner class; and USS *Theodore E. Chandler* (DD 717), Gearing class. Within each class, individual ships varied in dimensions, e.g., in overall length by as much as one foot.



Destroyers in mothballs: Fletchers undergo deactivation at the San Diego Naval Base early in 1946. (NH 95674)

FLETCHER CLASS ARMAMENT VARIATIONS

Dates installed	4/42–5/42	6/42–3/43	6/42–2/43	3/43–8/43	7/43–2/45	6/45–3/46
Dates carried	4/42–12/43	6/42–8/44	6/42–9/43	3/43–12/44	7/43–mothballs	6/45–mothballs
No. of ships	3	33	3 ¹	40	167	53
21-inch torpedo tubes	10 (quintuple mounts)		5 (quintuple mount)	10 (quintuple mounts)		5 (quintuple mount)
5-inch/38 cal. dual-purpose	5 (single mounts)		4 (single mounts)	5 (single mounts)		
1.1-inch AA	4 (quad mount)	–				
40 millimeter Bofors AA	–	4 (twin mounts)	2 (twin mount)	6 (twin mounts)	10 (twin mounts)	14 (2 quad mounts; 3 twin mounts)
20 millimeter Oerlikon AA	6–11 (single mounts)	4–8 (single mounts)	8 (single mounts)	6–11 (single mounts)	7 (single mounts)	12 (twin mounts)
Depth charges	2 tracks for 600-lb. charges; 6 projectors for 300-lb. charges					

¹ Floatplane catapult conversion: planned for six ships; only three were completed with this configuration

ALLEN M. SUMNER AND GEARING CLASS ARMAMENT VARIATIONS

Class and modification	Allen M. Sumner original	Allen M. Sumner anti-kamikaze	Robert H. Smith minelayer ¹	Gearing original	Gearing anti-kamikaze	Gearing radar picket ²
21-inch torpedo tubes	10 (quintuple mounts)	5 (quintuple mount)	–	10 (quintuple mounts)	5 (quintuple mount)	–
5-inch/38 cal. dual-purpose	6 (twin mounts)					
40 millimeter Bofors AA	12 (2 quad mounts; 2 twin mounts)	16 (3 quad mounts; 2 twin mounts)	12 (2 quad mounts; 2 twin mounts)	12 (2 quad mounts; 2 twin mounts)	16 (3 quad mounts; 2 twin mounts)	16 (3 quad mounts; 2 twin mounts)
20 millimeter Oerlikon AA	11 (single mounts)	18–20 (twin mounts)	7 (single mounts)	11 (single mounts)	18–20 (twin mounts)	16 (twin mounts)
Depth charges	2 tracks for 600-lb. charges; 6 projectors for 300-lb charges					

¹ Minelayers carried 4 projectors for 300-lb charges ² Early radar pickets initially retained their after torpedo tube mounts

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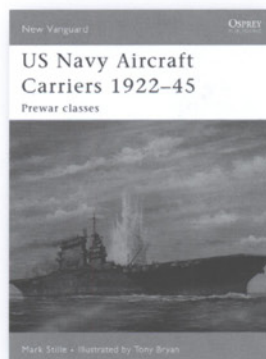
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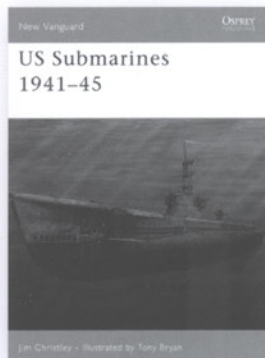
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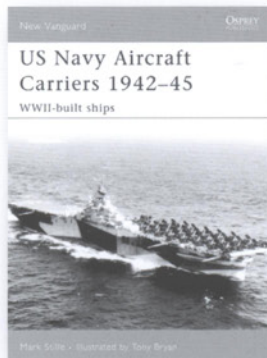
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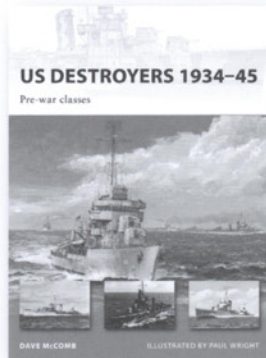
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